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MUSLIM-CROAT RELATIONS IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA, 1987-1997

by

Darko Spajic

December 1998

Thesis Advisor: Daniel J. Moran
Second Reader: Paul N. Stockton

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The purpose of this thesis is to identify and explain the causes of instability in Muslim-Croat relations in the period between 1990-1997. These two nations are supposed to be the main pillars of the new Bosnian state born in Dayton, Ohio on November 21, 1995. So far, the Serbs have eschewed all efforts of the International Community in the direction of the stronger integration of a Bosnian state, and there are no signs of possible improvement in the future. If the project of a Muslim-Croat Federation fails, the whole state is at stake. Muslim leadership, along with many historians and political analysts hold the Croats responsible for the deterioration of Muslim-Croat relations, but a number of important developments do not fit this assumption. The author will argue that although the Muslims and the Croats did not create their alliance in the Bosnian war in good faith, the main cause of deterioration of Muslim-Croat relations is the wavering policy of the international community toward the Yugoslav crisis.

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MUSLIM-CROAT RELATIONS IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA, 1987-1997

Darko Spajic
Captain, Croatian Army
B.S., University of Zagreb, Croatia, 1990

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to identify and explain the causes of instability in Muslim-Croat relations in the period between 1990-1997. These two nations are supposed to be the main pillars of the new Bosnian state born in Dayton, Ohio on November 21, 1995. So far, the Serbs have eschewed all efforts of the International Community in the direction of the stronger integration of a Bosnian state, and there are no signs of possible improvement in the future. If the project of a Muslim-Croat Federation fails, the whole state is at stake. Muslim leadership, along with many historians and political analysts hold the Croats responsible for the deterioration of Muslim-Croat relations, but a number of important developments do not fit this assumption.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, representatives of the International Community have been facing the problem of poor Muslim-Croat relations. These two nations are supposed to be the main pillars of the new Bosnian state born in Dayton, Ohio on November 21, 1995. They showed the political will to overcome disagreements and create a common territorial entity – the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina - which was the core of the present state Bosnia-Herzegovina established in Dayton.

So far, the Serbs have eschewed all efforts of the International Community in the direction of the stronger integration of a Bosnian state, and there are no signs of possible improvement in the future. So, if the project of a Muslim-Croat Federation fails, the whole state is at stake.

This thesis examines different stages of Muslim-Croat relations, from the culmination of the political crisis in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, to the beginning of implementation of the Dayton agreement in 1996. These relations were always dynamic and they had been changing in accordance with wider political circumstances but they never erupted into open military conflict until 1993.

Muslim leadership, and many political analysts, hold the leadership of Croatia responsible for the deterioration of Muslim-Croat relations. They explain events by pointing to an assumed Serb-Croat carve-up of Bosnia to achieve a Greater Croatia and a Greater Serbia. Serbs and Croats are supposed to have

plotted against Muslims, and agreed to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina so that the result of the war was known even before the war started. But, a number of important developments do not fit this assumption, such as:

- There was a war between the Serbs and Croats in which about 20,000 people died, more than 200,000 were wounded and more than 300,000 were displaced on both sides.
- The Republic of Croatia was the very first country that recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent state.
- The Republic of Croatia hosted more than 350,000 Bosnian Muslim refugees who, according to the alleged Serb-Croat agreement, were supposed to be enemies.
- The Republic of Croatia and Bosnian Croats actively supported the establishment of a Muslim-dominated Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and supplied weapons in spite of the international arms embargo.
- Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina signed a formal military alliance in 1992 and reconfirmed it in 1995.
- The heaviest fighting broke out first in Central Bosnia, where Bosnian Croat enclaves were encircled by Muslim dominated areas.
- Croats alone liberated the city of Mostar from Serbs, and later helped in establishing Muslim dominated Army units of Bosnia-Herzegovina in that city.
- During the Muslim-Croat war, Bosnian Croats did not conquer any part of the predominately Muslim ethnic territory. Quite the contrary, they lost the predominately Croat city of Vares.

This thesis examined the terrible consequences for Muslim-Croat relations of a wavering policy on the part of the International Community toward the Yugoslav crisis. Even a superficial look at the involvement of the International Community in the Yugoslav (Bosnian) crisis will reveal its imprudent inconsistencies.

The sides in the Yugoslav crisis sometimes received the same messages from the European Union and the United States, but mostly the messages were completely different. Such chaotic diplomacy prolonged the war and affected Muslim-Croat relations in the worst possible way. The big share of responsibility for the Muslim-Croat war lays on the international community and its inconsistent policy.

The introduction of Containment policy was one of the lowest points of the international diplomacy during the Yugoslav crisis. It showed that the policy of the international community toward the Yugoslav crisis was only a set of half-hearted and inconsistent decisions.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, representatives of the international community have been facing the problem of poor Muslim-Croat relations. These two nations are supposed to be the main pillars of the new Bosnian state born at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio on November 21, 1995. It can also be said that the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina is primarily the result of a common decision of Muslims and Bosnian Croats during the referendum on independence in February/March 1992, followed by common resistance against Serbian aggression during the early stage of the war that ensued. These two nations showed the political will to overcome disagreements and create a common territorial entity – the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina - which was the core of the present state Bosnia-Herzegovina established in Dayton.

In the long run, the strongest threat to the existence of the independent state of Bosnia-Herzegovina is not Serbian separatism, but political and military conflict between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats.

Presently, the independent state of Bosnia-Herzegovina can effectively exist as long as at least two of its three major nations want to live together within internationally recognized state borders. So far, the Serbs have eschewed all efforts of the international community in the direction of the stronger integration of a Bosnian state, and there are no signs of possible improvement in the future. That is why good Muslim-Croat relations are the key to the existence of an

integral Bosnian state. If the project of a Muslim-Croat Federation fails, the whole state is at stake.

This thesis will examine different stages of Muslim-Croat relations, from the culmination of the political crisis in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, to the beginning of implementation of the Dayton agreement in 1996. This was the most turbulent period in the history of the relations between these two peoples since the emergence of modern nationalities in the 19th century. These relations were always dynamic and they had been changing in accordance with wider political circumstances but they never erupted into open military conflict until 1993.

From the middle of the 19th century until independence, the Bosnian people lived in five different states, which to some extent corresponded to five different but also relatively stable stages of Muslim-Croat relations: The Ottoman Empire (1463-1876), the Austro-Hungarian (1878-1918), the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941), the Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945), and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1992). Interestingly, after independence, the quality of Muslim-Croat relations changed several times within a couple of years - from delighted cooperation in 1991, to open warfare in 1993 - and then to the "marriage of convenience" in 1994, which continues to the present.

The main tasks of this thesis it to identify and explain the causes of instability in Muslim-Croat relations in recent years, especially as compared with

the previous era of stability. The first step is to determine what internal and external factors had a major impact on Muslim-Croat relations. Secondly, it is necessary to determine the attitude of Muslims and Croats toward other major players in the Bosnian crisis, a factor that was often ignored. Third, the relations between Muslims and Croats must be reviewed in the broader context of the Yugoslav crisis because the major players were almost the same on both the Yugoslav and Bosnian levels of crisis.

These major players were: the free elected leadership in Serbia, the free elected leadership in Croatia, the leadership of the former Yugoslav Army, the free elected leadership of Bosnian Muslims, the free elected leadership of Bosnian Serbs, the free elected leadership of Bosnian Croats, and last but not least, the international community. These elected leaderships (especially in Croatia and Serbia) set the tone for the overall relations among their nations in the former Yugoslavia. In Bosnia itself, the intercourse among nations depended a lot on local national leaders. The national leaders who shared power within central Bosnia had influence, but not overall control over the local national leaders in cities and villages throughout Bosnia. This fact has usually been neglected in many analyses, but it is very important for understanding the strange and sometimes "impossible" alliances that occurred during the war on the local level.

The Serbian leadership and the leadership of the former Yugoslav Army were already deeply involved in the Yugoslav constitutional crisis before the first

free election in 1990 and their position did not change after the elections. The Serbian leadership orchestrated the Yugoslav crisis on the top level and in the field even before other major players in the Yugoslav and Bosnian crisis appeared on the political scene. The former Yugoslav Army was just the instrument for the realization of Serbian strategy. There are numerous proven instances of how the former Yugoslav Army and the Serbian political leadership acted in conjunction toward the same goals. Therefore, they enjoyed a significant advantage before the leaders of other Yugoslav republics reacted to the crisis a couple of years later.

The importance of the Muslims' attitude toward the conflict between Serbs and Croats in the former Yugoslav state was usually ignored, but among other factors, it had a significant impact on the Muslim-Croat relations in Bosnia. The Croats resented Muslims doing many (for them) unacceptable things on an international and local level such as the application of Bosnia for membership into the Organization of Islamic Conference, the application of the country for membership in the Organization of non-Allied Countries, the Muslim dominated government pledging within the international community for non-recognition of the Republic of Croatia as an independent state, then, flirting with the Yugoslav Army, then, their ignorant position toward the war the Yugoslav Army waged in Croatia and against some Bosnian Croatian villages during that war, and so forth. Many former Yugoslav Army officers of Muslim origin took part in the war in Croatia and later held high appointments in the Bosnian Army.

These factors were usually ignored, but created serious doubts among Croats (in Croatia and in Bosnia) about possible cooperation with Muslims. The ambiguous position of the Muslim leadership toward a thriving Serbian nationalism even confused part of the Muslim electoral body who, therefore, voted in some cities for Bosnian Croatian national parties.

Muslim leadership and many historians and political analysts hold the leadership of Croatia responsible for the deterioration of Muslim-Croat relations. They explain events by pointing to an assumed Serb-Croat carve-up of Bosnia to achieve a Greater Croatia and a Greater Serbia. Serbs and Croats are supposed to have plotted against Muslims, and agreed to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina so that the result of the war was known even before the war started.

A number of important developments do not fit this assumption, such as:

- Immediately after the alleged Serb-Croat agreement, a war broke out between them, in which about 20,000 people died, more than 200,000 were wounded and more than 300,000 were displaced on both sides.

- The Republic of Croatia was the very first country that recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent state.

- When war broke out in Bosnia, the Republic of Croatia hosted more than 350,000 Bosnian Muslim refugees who, according to the alleged Serb-Croat agreement, were supposed to be enemies. Quite the contrary, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims fought Bosnian Serbs together throughout the whole of

Bosnia until 1993, and in some areas that alliance continued even after the Muslim-Croat war in Central Bosnia broke out.

- The Republic of Croatia and Bosnian Croats actively supported the establishment of a Muslim dominated Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina with weapons supplies, in spite of the international arms embargo. Weapons supplies continued in some areas, even during the Muslim-Croat war. There was no case in history of warfare in which a war party delivered weapons to the side that was supposed to be its enemy. It is very hard to believe that this was such case.

- Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina signed a formal military alliance in which the Croatian Army was allowed to enter Bosnia and support Bosnian Croat and Muslim Armies in border areas.

- If the Muslim-Croat war started because Croatia wanted to grab Bosnian territory, why did fighting break out first in Central Bosnia, where Bosnian Croat enclaves were encircled by Muslim dominated areas and where Bosnian Croats were in a much weaker position than in border areas of the Republic of Croatia?

- If the Muslim-Croat war was a result of a Serb-Croat plot, why didn't the Croats hit suddenly and try to overtake the whole city of Mostar first, (which was the only metropolis where Croats were a majority of the population until the

1980s)? In fact, Croats alone[1] liberated the city from Serbs, and later helped in establishing Muslim dominated Army units of Bosnia-Herzegovina in that city.

- During the Muslim-Croat war, Bosnian Croats did not conquer any part of the predominately Muslim ethnic territory. Quite the contrary, they had trouble defending their own ethnic territory and they lost the predominately Croat city of Vares.

Those who accept the theory of a Serb-Croat conspiracy usually speak of 30,000 or more soldiers from the Croatian Army (from Croatia proper) who supported the Bosnian Croat Army, the Croatian Defense Council (or in the Croatian language, Hrvatsko Vijece Obrane - HVO). If so, why did the Croats have so much trouble during the Muslim-Croat war? During 1993, the Croatian Army successfully carried out two limited actions against the Serbs, who were much better equipped and organized than the Muslims. An additional force of 30,000 would have almost doubled the strength of the Bosnian Croats and would have significantly changed the balance of power between the Croats and Muslims.

These facts do not fit the theory of a Serb-Croat plot against Muslims, and they suggest a different reason for the deterioration of Muslim-Croat relations.

This thesis will examine the terrible consequences for Muslim-Croat relations of a wavering policy on the part of the international community toward

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[1] Disproportional Croatian contributions to the defense of Bosnia in the early stages of war caused a lot of tension on local levels, leading to the accusation that the Croats waged a war and the Muslim only took care of the politics.

the Yugoslav crisis. Even a superficial look at the involvement of the international community in the Yugoslav (Bosnian) crisis will reveal its imprudent inconsistencies.

The European Union changed its policy toward the crisis in the former Yugoslavia several times. In 1991, the European Community tried for the first time to practice their Common Foreign and Security Policy and appointed a special mediator for the Yugoslav crisis. He tried to find a comprehensive solution for the whole of Yugoslavia, and later for Bosnia, but he failed. The starting position was not to recognize territorial conquest, but after Serbian refusal of this position the Europeans were ready to change their policy in the autumn of 1991.

The German-imposed recognition of Croatia in January 1992 marked a change in the EU policy, which meant that the EU again was not ready to accept Serbian territorial conquest. In 1992, a standing peace conference for the former Yugoslavia, co-chaired by special mediators from the EU and the UN, was established in Geneva, Switzerland. The Co-Chairmen, who were chief negotiators at the same time, tried to create the peace plan solution which would prevent ethnic partition of Bosnia and annul Serbian territorial conquest. But, major power players involved in the crisis refused to support that plan and it failed.

Later, the Europeans changed their policy again and took a more realistic approach toward the Bosnian crisis. The results of that new policy were two

peace plans which assumed ethnic partition and recognized some Serbian territorial conquests, but again failed, largely owing to Serbian resistance.

In 1994, thereafter, the major Europeans powers abandoned the common European approach and joined Americans and Russians in a newly formed Contact Group. The Contact Group proposed a new plan, but even that plan failed.

The policy of the United States toward the Yugoslav crisis was inconsistent, as well. At the beginning of the Yugoslav crisis, the Bush administration had no wish to be involved in this crisis and ceded the problem to the Europeans. The United States' policy generally supported political steps undertaken by the European Union and the United Nations, but carefully avoided getting involved in any practical way.

When the Clinton administration came to power, the situation turned upside-down. President Clinton did not want to act unilaterally to fulfill the policy announced in the election process - "lift and strike" - but he publicly promised to support the implementation of any peace plan that would be accepted by all warring sides. He also appointed a special envoy for the Yugoslav peace process, who joined the Europeans. The Clinton administration also demanded a much tougher course toward the Serbs, but refused to be engaged in the peace making process. It made no effort to persuade Bosnian Serbs and Muslims to accept, what was probably the best peace plan obtainable – the

Vance-Owen Plan of 1993. When the situation on the field deteriorated thereafter, the Clinton administration responded with new a "containment" policy.

The Clinton administration made things even more complicated. It supported the Muslim leadership in refusing any plan rewarding Serbian aggression. But, at the same time, it did not want to support the Muslim-Croat alliance with concrete means (lifting the arms embargo and air-strikes), because it would mean confrontation with its NATO allies, who were ready to accept the Serbian territorial conquest.

When President Clinton appointed a special mediator for former Yugoslavia, the Russians responded in the same way. Russian and American special envoys partially acted as observers in the peace process led by EU/UN mediators, but sometimes worked on parallel tracks. One of the results of American work on a parallel track was the so-called Muslim-Croat Federation, which stopped the Muslim-Croat war but definitely confirmed partition of the country.

Finally in 1995, the United States took advantage of changed circumstances in the battle field and, with "stick and carrot" policy toward all sides, found the solution that was accepted as the minimum of basic requirements of all warring sides.

This thesis will show how the relations between Muslims and Croats changed with every shift in the policy of the international community and how the inability of the international community to prevent and punish Serbian aggression

resulted in these terrible consequences. This definitely convinced Bosnian Muslims and Croats that an independent Bosnia was stillborn and they started fighting for territory.

After the war, the Muslim-Croat relations came to a new stage. Both sides agreed to build a common political entity, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but their supposed cooperation bore a heavy burden from the previous war. On the other hand, both sides interpreted this agreement according to their pre-war political attitudes, which required frequent American arbitration. Many prewar problems between Muslim and Bosnian Croats remained unsolved. The political positions of the main Muslim and Croatian political parties did not change a lot. The Croats are seeking more autonomy from Sarajevo, while Muslims want a more centralized organization. Unlike politicians, Muslim and Croat soldiers achieved significant results in building the joint armed forces, which now gives some hope for the future. In spite of all these problems, full implementation of the Washington and Dayton Agreement remains the only possible framework for Muslim-Croat cooperation and the building of the state of Bosnia.

II. A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. SITUATION IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

It is very hard to speak about Muslim-Croat relations before the19th century in terms of relationships between modern nations. Although, all Bosnian medieval kings and the majority of the population were of Croatian descent[2] and Roman Catholic religion in the medieval period, it is possible to speak with some certainty only about relations between religions that existed during that time in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Muslims in Bosnia were not able to establish a separate national identity before the Austrian occupation in 1878, which broke their connections with Istanbul.

The Ottoman Empire conquered Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1463 rather quickly. The Hungarian-Croatian kings fought for control over Western Bosnia during the next fifty years, until the battle in Mohacs fields in 1527, when the last Hungarian king, King Bela was killed. Finally, the Ottoman Empire took control over Bosnia, much of Croatia and a significant part of Hungary. The horrors of war forced the indigenous population to emigrate and new authorities invited different Slavic and non-Slavic tribes (Serbs, Vlachs, or Moralchs) from other parts of the Ottoman Empire to populate these empty regions.

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2 "We can say that the majority of the Bosnian territory was occupied by Croats - or at least, by Slavs under Croat rule -in the seventh century; but that is tribal level which has little or no meaning five centuries later." Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia, A Shot History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p.12.

The Ottoman Turks were generally more tolerant toward the Orthodox Christians, whose religion was one of the official religions in the Empire, than to Roman Catholics who were identified with the Austrians – the main Turkish enemy. Early - modern Bosnian History was accordingly marked with major wars against Austria fought every two to three decades. After Eugene of Savoy burned Sarajevo to the ground in 1697, the majority of Bosnian Catholics fled before the Ottoman Turks retaliated. Those who remained were exposed to terrible retaliation and many of them converted to Islam in order to evade the terror. Also, in the areas where Catholics were intermixed with Orthodox Christians, the Roman Catholic population was exposed to double taxation - from the Ottoman rulers and from the Orthodox Church, what definitely sped up their converting to the other two religions. Only the extreme sacrifice of Bosnian Franciscans prevented the total assimilation of the Catholic population. In the latter part of the 17th or maybe the early 18th century, the Orthodox population probably became the majority in Bosnia.

In the early 1830s, there was a strong Pan-Slavic movement throughout Europe, which later evolved into national movements among the different Slavic nations. This national movement among the Croats started as the "Illyric Movement," which imagined all South Slavs to be descendants of an ancient

Illyrian[3] people. The followers of this movement called for the unification of the old South Slavs into one big South Slavic state.

The Muslim nobility did not like these ideas about unification of South Slavs, because Muslims would have been the minority in any such state. Above all, the nobility was afraid of losing the benefits they enjoyed in the Ottoman Empire. The revolutionary and national movements in other parts of Europe did not affect the Muslim population of the lower classes. After all, there were much more serious events in Bosnia and neighboring Serbia - insurgencies and rising Serbian nationalism.

The Serbian national movement appeared in Serbia and partially in Bosnia and Croatia (wherever the Serbian population lived) in the early 19th century. In contrast to the Illyric movement, the Serbian movement considered all South Slavs to be Serbs, with different religions. The ultimate goal of this movement was to unify "all Serbs," regardless of religion, in one Serbian Kingdom. Serbian nationalism found support in Russia and, in the first half of the 19th century, circumstances began to move toward open hostility between Muslims and Orthodox people. Relations between Muslims and Catholics were distant but without open hostility.

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[3] Actually Albanians are direct descendants of old Illyrians.

B. BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA IN AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

Austrian occupation of Bosnia was part of the deal made at the Berlin Congress (1878), by which the big powers tried to avoid the creation of one big Balkan Slavic state influenced by Russia. Bulgaria, Serbia, and Monte Negro got full independence. Although Austria-Hungary occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina with Turkish consent, part of the Muslim nobility in Bosnia refused this take-over and tried to prevent it through an armed struggle. These struggles and the uncertainty of the future were the main reasons why a significant part of the Muslim population (Muslim Slavs and Turks) emigrated to other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Struggle stopped as soon as it became clear that the new authorities would not change the old social structure of Bosnian society, and the Muslim nobility would keep almost all the benefits they enjoyed in the Ottoman Empire. Muslims officially accepted the Austrian annexation of Bosnia in 1910, when the first Bosnian Parliament was created. The first Bosnian Muslim political party was created in 1906. Bosnian Croatian and Bosnian Serbian parties were created two years later, but their representatives sat in Budapest until 1910.

The national structure of Bosnia changed in the first years after the occupation in 1878. For the first time in a couple of hundred years, the numbers of Croats (Catholics) increased, while numbers of Muslims was significantly decreased. The Orthodox population decreased slightly, but after the emigration of the Muslims, the Serbs (Orthodox) definitely became a majority of the Bosnian

population. Austrian occupation induced the formation of a Bosnian Muslim nationality. The problem with national identification of Bosnian Muslims was that they did not have an independent state in history (like Serbs and Croats) with which they could identify. Medieval Bosnia was a Christian state, and Bosnia in which they lived was just a province of another sovereign state. The broken connection with Turkey and the need for balancing between Croats and Serbs created a sufficient condition for formation of a new Bosnian Muslim nation.

C. MUSLIMS, CROATS AND SERBS IN A KINGDOM OF YUGOSLAVIA

The negotiation about unification of all South Slavs in one state started even before the end of World War I. The Yugoslav Committee, which consisted of exiled South Slavic politicians from Austria-Hungary, negotiated conditions for unification with the chief of the Serbian government, Nikola Pasic. These negotiations were held on the Greek island of Corfu in 1917, where the Serbian government spent most of the war in exile. Committee was surprised with the toughness of the Serbian position, but after Western pressure on the Serbs, together they finally created the general framework for the unification of South Slavs better known as the Corfu Declaration. At first, Serbs saw the unification of all South Slavs as the realization of all their nationalistic and showed little understanding of the demands of the Yugoslav Committee for an equal position for all the nations in that state. Croatian delegates were especially sensitive to issues of equality because Croatia, at least on paper, kept some kind of

autonomy in both the Hungarian-Croatian, and Austro-Hungarian states. But, idealistic dreams about brotherhood and unity of all South Slavs prevailed, and all problems were swept under the carpet in order to realize a more important goal - unification.

South Slavic politicians who remained in Austria-Hungary did not have a clear idea of what to do after the war. Some of them joined the Yugoslav Committee in exile, while the others were examining all other options such as, the creation of a joint South Slavic entity within Austria-Hungary, the creation of independent states, and unification with Serbia.

Bosnian Muslims were divided. Some of them preferred autonomy for Bosnia within the Hungarian state, while the others wanted an independent state. Bosnian Croats and Croats in Croatia itself were also divided between groups, those that wanted an independent state and those that wanted unification with Serbia. A similar situation existed in Slovenia. At the end of October 1918, the National Assembly, which consisted of delegates from Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, met in Zagreb, Croatia and established the country of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs (SHS). But, with Italian occupation of the western parts of Slovenia and Croatia, public opinion in these lands shifted toward unification with Serbia, in the hope that the Serbian military might protect territories on the west. So, the country of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs got unified with The Kingdom of Serbia on December 1, 1918. The new Kingdom of

Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established without any guarantees about the status of non-Serbian nations and lands.

The worst Croatian and Slovenian nightmares were realized. The Serbian government showed no intention of confronting Italy. With the help of Muslim delegates, a centralist state structure was imposed. Bosnian Muslims, organized in Yugoslav Muslim Organization (JMO) and led by Mehmed Spaho voted for a centralist constitution in 1920, in return for a less radical agricultural reform, and in some way for the preservation of territorial-administrative borders of Bosnia[4]. Disappointed with the centralist constitution, Croatian delegates left the Assembly in Belgrade. Croats were also disappointed with the Muslims' position of sacrificing a more serious systematic goal, the internal organization of the whole state, for some minor benefits. Spaho cooperated in several unstable governments, acting somewhere between anti-centrist Croats and centrist Serbs.

During the next years, tension between Belgrade and Zagreb continued to grow and a crisis culminated in 1928, when a Serbian delegate killed the leader of the main Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), Stjepan Radic, and four other Croatian delegates in the Belgrade Assembly. For the most radical Croats from the Croatian Party of the Right (HSP), led by Ante Pavelic, that was a clear sign that a political agreement with the Serbs was not possible. They then emigrated to Italy and established the Ustasha (uprising) movement. They would return to

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[4] Bosnia kept its old administrative division in six territorial units and outline of Bosnia was preserved, what did not happen with Croatia and Slovenia.

Croatia with German troops in 1941 and establish a German dominated Independent State of Croatia.

After the Radic assassination, there were numerous riots throughout Croatia. King Aleksandar took advantage of the political chaos, and imposed a dictatorship in January 1929 that continued until his death in 1934. He renamed the country Yugoslavia and reorganized her into nine "banovinas" (districts) which had nothing to do with the historical borders of the South Slavic regions. Bosnia was divided into four "banovinas" and Muslims became the minority in each of them, because they covered some parts of neighboring Serbia, Croatia, and Monte Negro. In 1930, Reis ul-ulema (a Muslim religious leader) was transferred from Sarajevo to Belgrade by the King's decree, which additionally disappointed Bosnian Muslims.

These and other similar political steps turned Muslims' public opinion toward a stronger cooperation with Croats. Again Spaho decided to cooperate with Slovenes and one faction of Serbs, led by Stojadinovic, in the new Yugoslav government formed after the king's death. The participants in this government formally signed a unification pact between their parties, but Stojadinovic was ousted by his own party and found himself in the strange position of ruling the country without the support of the main Serbian and Croatian parties.

Realizing that there would be no stability in a country without a fundamental political settlement between Serbs and Croats, the Regent Pavel, who formally ruled Yugoslavia after Aleksandar's death, induced negotiations

between the main political Serbian and Croatian parties. In 1939, Vlatko Macek, the new leader of the strongest Croatian party HSS and Dragisa Cvetkovic, the leader of the strongest Serbian party signed an agreement between Serbs and Croats which ensured Croatian autonomy within Yugoslavia.

Muslims were deeply disappointed with this agreement in which some parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina with a Croatian majority were included in newly formed "Banovina Croatia." Spaho died during the negotiations, and his successor Djafer Kulenovic called for the establishment of a special "Banovina" for Bosnia. But, the Serbs considered the rest of Bosnia to be their asset and showed no intention of making any concessions to Bosnia.

The political position of Muslims during the inter-war period was rather complex. The majority of Muslims were inclined toward better cooperation with Croats, and some of them were disappointed with Spaho's political maneuvering. The most pro-Croat Muslim politician, Hakia Hadjic, set up the Muslim branch of the Croatian Peasant Party, but he only got a handful of Muslim votes. Mehmed Spaho's brother Fehim, who was Reis ul-ulema and declared himself a Croat,[5] had a leading role in the pro-Croat Muslim cultural association. Yet he was adamant about preserving a separate Muslim identity and issued an order against mixed marriages.

During the inter-war period, the Bosnian Muslims had been passing through the process of transformation from a religious to a national community.

The majority of them thought that Bosnia should preserve a separate identity in the Yugoslav state, even in the areas where the Serbs and Croats were a clear majority. This political goal survived World War II and later was embodied in the Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina within Tito's Yugoslav Federation.

D. WORLD WAR II

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia capitulated after only twelve days of resistance to German, Hungarian and Bulgarian troops. Even before the military operations were completed, under German patronage, Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was proclaimed. That country consisted of Bosnia, and most of continental Croatia. The Croatian coast became part of the Italian Empire. That "independent" country was officially divided into German and Italian zones of influence, and the line of division was drawn diagonally from the Northwest to the Southeast. The political leadership of NDH consisted of emigrants, mostly members of the Croatian Party of the Right (HSP), who went abroad after Stjepan Radic's assassination in 1928. They assumed that a political agreement with the Serbs was not possible. Because of German domination, the NDH imposed some anti-Jewish racial laws, but its primary concern was the vast Serbian minority in the central parts of Croatia and Bosnia. Muslims were guaranteed all rights, and were generally considered Croats of Islamic origin. Some prominent prewar pro-Croatian Muslim politicians were co-opted into the

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[5] Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia, A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p.185.

government. This was supposed to ensure Muslim popular support to the new authorities.

Serbs were soon driven to opposition of NDH and started an armed struggle against the Ustasha troops. Mutual retaliation and counter retaliation created a crime-spiral, which could hardly be stopped. The Serbian military resistance was based on the old Serbian Chetnik (trooper) tradition of guerilla warfare used during World War I. The most active were Chetniks in Bosnia, not so much against the Germans and Italians,[6] but against the Croats. Those in Serbia lay low and waited for the uprising, which would eventually come when the Allies turned the war against the Germans.[7]

While atrocities committed by Croats against the Serbs, and those committed by Serbs against Croats could be explained, the Chetniks' crimes against Bosnian Muslims are not understandable. Although Bosnian Muslims did not like the position of Bosnia within the NDH (they had been seeking for autonomy), after these crimes,[8] many of them joined either the Ustasha organization or the special SS German-organized units. Later, those Muslims also took part in crimes committed against the Serbs.

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[6] Actually, Chetniks openly collaborated with Italians in Bosnia from the beginning of the war, and with Germans from 1943.

[7] Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia, A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p.177.

[8] Chetniks killed several thousand Muslims in period 1941-1942 in regions of Bileca, Foca, Gorazde, and Visegrad.

Josip Broz Tito led the Communist resistance in a loose alliance with the Chetniks in the early stages of war. Very soon, the Germans pushed him out of Serbia to Bosnia, where he stayed throughout the rest of the war.[9] In Bosnia, his predominately Serbian troops merged with the Croatian Partisans (from the coast), that were fighting against Italian occupation. Tito's ideologists created slogans about equality, brotherhood, and the unity of all Yugoslav nations. This attracted people of all nationalities to his units. But, the strength of his units was usually overestimated and the Germans initiated all serious armed clashes against Germans. Tito's main concern was the possibility of an Allied landing in the Balkans, which might have prevented him from taking over power after the war. After the Soviet liberation/occupation of Belgrade in 1944, his position was secured.

The position of three Bosnian nations in World War II was rather different. A minority of Bosnian Croats joined the Ustasha organization, but many of them welcomed the establishment of a Croat dominant state. Later, some of them even joined the Tito's Partisan resistance.

The majority of Bosnian Serbs joined the Chetnik movement in the beginning of the war, and later when Tito came into Bosnia some transferred to the Partisan troops. With the approaching end of war, the Serbs massively transferred from the Chetniks to the Partisan movement.

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[9] Even, "Chetnik" leader, former Colonel of royal Yugoslav Army moved in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where he had much stronger base. From early 1942 until the Soviet Third Ukrainian Army troops came into Serbia in October 1944, there were no armed struggles in Serbia at all.

The position of the Bosnian Muslims was rather complicated. In the prewar period they were more inclined toward Croats, but they were not satisfied with the territorial organization of the NDH, which did not ensure special status for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Such vague relations with Croats created a significant diversity in the Muslim armed resistance. Some of them joined the Ustasha troops; others participated in the self-organized "Muslim Volunteer Legion" which fought more against the Partisans than against Chetniks. They also tried to cooperate directly with the Germans. Some Muslims joined the German SS troops called the Handjar Division. In the Zenica region, almost incredibly, Muslims led by Dr Ismet Popovac created the joint Muslim-Chetnik groups.[10] Finally, the fifth group of Muslims joined the Partisan movement, when they became more politically and militarily distinguishable from the Chetniks. After the end of World War II many Muslims accepted the idea of living in communist Yugoslavia, which unlike the Ustasha and Chetnik solutions, offered a federal state structure in which Bosnia-Herzegovina continued to exist as a separate entity.

E. YUGOSLAVIA IN TITO'S TIME

The events during World War II, which in the case of the former Yugoslavia were the mixture of civil wars and struggles for independence, largely determined the role and the relations among Yugoslav nations during the post-

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[10] Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia, A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p.188.

war period. The Partisan resistance was a small-scale movement[11] throughout the war, and the majority of the Yugoslav population was not involved in any kind of resistance. But at the end of the war, a massive transfer of Chetniks to the Partisans simultaneously enlarged Tito's political base and ensured the Serbian dominance during the postwar period. The Majority of war veterans were absorbed into the ranks of the Communist Party, and under Tito's patronage they had been tailoring the destiny of Yugoslavia until 1990.

Croats were in a difficult position because the majority of them lived for four years in the NDH. By default, their loyalty to a new regime was questionable if they had not taken part in the active Partisan resistance. Even Croatian veterans were not in a much better position. They started with the resistance in June 1941 without waiting for an official order from the Communist Party's Central Committee in Belgrade and Tito never forgave them that disobedience.[12] In 1948, the most influential leader of the Croatian Communists, Andrija Hebrang, was prosecuted in one of Tito's show-trials and later died under unexplained circumstances in Belgrade's prison.

Bosnian Croats were in an even worse position than Croats in Croatia itself, because their participation in the Partisan movement was rather small. They favored the Ustasha movement and they probably were the predominant element of that organization. Their over-representation in the Ustasha movement is easy to explain. With Bosnian absorption in the NDH, Bosnian

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[11] Partisans tied down only four low-caliber German Divisions instead of twelve, which was officially proclaimed. Ibid. p.182.

[12] Croatian Communists began active resistance on June 22, 1941 and Tito's Central Committee in Belgrade made the decision on resistance on July 4, 1945.

Croats would have benefited the most. All other options, either an independent Bosnia, or the annexation by Serbia, would have put them in a minority position.

The Croatian people would have borne the brunt of the creation of the NDH for a long time after the World War II. In Tito's time, they were tenants in their own Socialist Republic of Croatia, because Croatian Serbs held most of the ruling, administrative, and police posts. Croatian contributions to the Federal budget were not followed with a proportional number of Croatian representatives in the Federal administration and in the Federal Army. This unacceptable situation caused a lot of frustrations. These frustrations broke out in the early 1970s during the movement known as the "Croatian Spring." Tito purged the leaders of the movement, but he also changed the Yugoslav constitution toward further decentralization. The "Croatian Spring" in 1971, and the armed insurgency started by one extreme emigrant Croatian group in 1972, confirmed the Serbian propaganda that Croats were destructive and that deep inside they never forgot the NDH. Later, every Croatian political step was judged with Ustasha in mind.

Needless to say, Croats in Bosnia suffered even more. Their reputation was so bad[13] that they could hardly get any job in a state agency or the government.[14] Discrimination fueled frustration and anger, and caused heavy

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[13] How bad the Croatian reputation was, can be seen from an interesting comparison of two Noel sentences. "In the Yugoslav Parliament of 1924, all the Muslim deputies identified themselves as Croats, except for Spaho himself." In contrast, "[a]n analysis of Party functionaries with Muslim names in 1956 Yugoslav 'Who is Who' shows that 17 per cent declared themselves as Croats and 62 per cent as Serbs." Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia, A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), pp.165-166 and p.197).

[14] In 1971, the Croats comprised more than 20 per cent of the Bosnian population, but it was hardly possible to find a Croat holding any important official position. Ibid., p.203.

emigration of Bosnian Croats to Republic of Croatia and Western countries after World War II. These frustrations would explode in strong nationalistic feelings during the first free elections in 1990 and Croats would vote for parties with strong Croatian national tendencies.

With the creation of a separate Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Yugoslav Federation, the old dreams of Bosnian Muslims almost came true. Although until the 1960s, Muslims were not recognized as a separate nation, a separate Bosnian Republic ensured their survival as a separate ethnic group. They were not assimilated by either the Serb or the Croats. Post-war political events in the world and in Yugoslavia played an important role in their furthering their national affirmation. Tito's connections with the Islamic countries in the Non-Allied Movement, and the general change of internal policies from integral Yugoslavisms toward decentralization,[15] enabled the strengthening of the separate national identity of Bosnian Muslims. Bosnian Communists of Muslim origin pushed for their recognition as one of the full-fledged Yugoslav nations in 1960 and they wanted their identity to be recognized, not as a religious but as a national one. At the same time, there was a revival of religious beliefs embodied in Alija Izetbegovic's *Islamic Declaration,* where he argued that Muslims should not abandon the spiritual values of Islam in exchange for western materialistic values. In the 1970s, Bosnian Muslims went to study at Arab universities, and in 1977, a Faculty of Islamic Theology was established at the Sarajevo University. The Olympic Winter Games held in 1984 significantly contributed to the urbanization of Sarajevo, and the further promotion of a special Bosnian identity.

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[15] This was possible after the dismissal of Aleksandar Rankovic, who was Tito's chief of Security Service and the strongest promoter of Yugoslav centralism.

However, the Bosnian Communists carefully watched all attempts to connect the Muslim religion to the Muslim nation. In the late 1970s, Communist authorities, estimating that the revival of Islam in Bosnian went too far, drew from the archives an old accusation against the Muslim clergy for cooperating with the Germans and Ustashas. In 1983, a group of religious Muslims was sent to prison, accused of doing "hostile and counterrevolutionary acts derived from Muslim nationalism." The leader of the group was Alija Izetbegovic.

Bosnian Communists of Muslim origin became the predominant factor within local Bosnian authority in the late 1960s, and they made significant efforts in building a separate Bosnian identity. With the decentralization of Yugoslavia their job was much easier and they were supported by a small number of Croats in the Bosnian Central Committee, such are Branko Mikulic and Hrvoje Istuk, who were trying to avoid a complete Serbian domination over the Bosnian Communist Party. Being short of cadres, the Bosnian Croats often ceded their slots in the high party and state's posts to Bosnian Muslims. After some time, Muslims took that practice for granted without paying attention to the interests of Bosnian Croats. During the reign of the Communist dictatorship, such policy was possible, but after the first free elections, the situation changed dramatically. The Croats became political factors in Bosnia. Suddenly, it became obvious that Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims have different political interest, besides prevention Serbian domination in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

III. THE DESTRUCTION OF YUGOSLAVIA

A. THE KOSOVO ISSUE - SERBIAN NATIONAL REVIVAL

With the first rumors about Tito's serious illness in 1980, foreign observers predicted the dissolution of Yugoslavia along republican and ethnic borders immediately after Tito's death. They usually pointed above all to Croatian nationalism and separatism, driven under the surface after 1971, and they did not expect that the final Yugoslav crisis could start in any another place.

The Serbo-Albanian conflict suddenly broke out in Kosovo in 1982 was thus a considerable surprise. Kosovo and Vojvodina were two autonomous provinces within Serbia, and in 1974 these provinces got the right of representation on the Federal level. Serbian nationalists were dissatisfied with the status of Kosovo and Vojvodina even before 1974. Until the dismissal of Rankovic, who ruled in Serbia with an iron fist, their control over Kosovo was guaranteed. In the 1970s, the situation in Kosovo was normalized, and ethnic Albanians enjoyed a significant level of cultural and political autonomy. Ethnic Albanians had been the clear majority in Kosovo since the 1960s, and in the early 1980s their nationalists considered that Kosovo should get the status of a republic within the Yugoslav Federation. Since 1982 Kosovo has been under a permanent police and military occupation. The International community accused Yugoslavia of violating the human rights of the Albanian population in Kosovo, but mad no move to intervene.

Albanian unrest in Kosovo only fueled the dissatisfaction of Serbian nationalists, who became louder in expressing their views after Tito's death. In the mid 1980s, Serbian nationalism vigorously revived. A number of books and articles[16] were published expressing the discontent with the position of the Republic of Serbia in Federal Yugoslavia, and sometimes they expressed open contempt toward other Yugoslav nations, not just toward Albanians. They expressed discontent with the "subordinate position" of Serbia within Yugoslavia, and in general for them, other Yugoslav republics exploited Serbia.[17]

In 1986, leading Serbian intellectuals drafted the notorious *"Memorandum"* of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts.[18] In it, they protested "the poor" position of Serbia within Yugoslavia, and raised the "question of the integrity of Serb people and their culture in the whole of Yugoslavia." They stated that integration could be achieved either by a strong centralization, as in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, or by the creation of an independent Serbian state that would comprise all parts of Yugoslavia where the

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[16] I am referring to journals such as Duga, Nin, etc and the fiercely anti-Muslim novel *Noz ("The Knife")*, written by Vuk Draskovic. Dobrica Cosic wrote a novel in 1985 glorifying the Chetnik movement and so forth.

[17] Actually, the Serbs benefited the most in comparison with other Yugoslav nations. The largest portion of the federal budget was spent for their benefit, because the Serbs were over represented in all federal institutions. The Serbs were 36% of the total of Yugoslav population (census 1991) but in they were in military 68%, diplomacy 55%, in federal administration 90%, and so forth.

[18] *Memorandum Srpske Akademije Nauka i Umetnosti,* <http://www.beograd.com/sanu/ > [Access October 21, 1998]

Serbs lived. Both ways lead to confrontation with other Yugoslav nations, and the Serbs started preparations for that conflict.

In 1986, the Yugoslav Army crated a new plan for the defense of the country called RAM.[19] It assumed that NATO would invade Yugoslavia with an incredible number of 15 air-born operations on Croatian coast. The line of Defense that was supposed to be established after the NATO attack, looked surprisingly like the borders of a Greater Serbia. The Army barracks in that area were reinforced and additionally equipped. In addition, the Yugoslav Army carried out a territorial reorganization. The Belgrade Military District "swallowed" the former military districts of Nis and Sarajevo and a large part of the Zagreb Military District. The new Belgrade Military District, together with two thirds of the Sea Sector of Split, looked like the imagined borders of a Greater Serbia, but at that time pointing out such a coincidence would have been considered "science fiction."

B. THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

Simultaneously with Gorbachev's Perestroyka, the European Community undertook further steps toward expansionism and more importantly for Yugoslavia, regional integration. The European Community even gave the opportunity to regions from communist countries to participate in its regional projects. The western Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Croatia took a chance

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[19] For an in depth explanation see issues of the journal *Hrvatski vojnik (Croatian Soldier)* in June, July, and August 1997.

and joined the Alpe-Adria project, which aimed to strengthen cultural and economic cooperation among Alpine and Adriatic countries. New winds from the West and from the East (perestroyka) induced the process of liberalization in western parts of Yugoslavia. At the same time, Yugoslavia headed toward a deep economic crisis. The Slovenian and Croatian public realized that the only way to overcome the crisis was the democratization of Yugoslavia and its integration into the European Community. Public opinion was transferred to the Slovenian and Croatian Communists who unofficially were proposing constitutional changes in Yugoslavia in order to converge on the west.

The Serbs also wanted constitutional changes, but in a different direction. In 1987, Slobodan Milosevic came to power in Serbia and very soon he embarked on the policy of Serbian nationalism, realizing that nationalism was a powerful tool for the manipulation of the Serbian masses. In the beginning, his main supporters were Serbs from Kosovo, but very soon nationalism spread all over Serbia and other parts of Yugoslavia with predominantly Serbian population. In late 1988, and early 1989 Milosevic ousted the elected leaders of Vojvodina and Monte Negro installing his own supporters. The leaders of the Albanian Communists were suspended and then prosecuted at a show-trial reminiscent of Stalin's days. In March 1989, the Serbian Assembly abolished the political autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo, clearly breaking the Federal constitution, but Milosevic was smart enough to keep newly appointed (not elected) representatives of these provinces in all Federal institutions. These

steps ensured his dominance in the Yugoslav Federation. Communists from other republics were shocked, but their policy until early 1989 can only be described as appeasement.

After the abolition of Kosovo's autonomy, ethnic Albanians went on a general strike. Milosevic responded with strong repression. After some time, the leaders of Slovenia and Croatia refused to contribute to the units of the Federal Police, because developments in Serbia and Kosovo represented a policy that was in total opposition to prevailing liberal (western) ideas.[20] The Serbs perceived this withdrawal of Slovenes and Croats from Kosovo as treason.

Until that moment, the Milosevic-controlled media used to attack only Slovenian Communists, but after that moment they turned on Croatian Communists and Croats in general. Croatian Communists kept a rather low profile in the bitter Serbo-Slovenian quarrels and they did not respond to the occasional Serbian "shootings" over Croatia. But new Croatian leadership answered Milosevic's attack. That provoked a reaction out of Croatian Serbs, who held their first mass meeting in support of Milosevic in Knin, which would later be known as a center of the self-styled Serbian Krajina.

Bosnian Communists, who were known as hard-liners and the guardians of Tito's cult, kept low in these conflicts and tried to lessen the growing tensions between Serbia and the western republics. During this time they were largely preoccupied by internal problems. Their most influential cadres were stuck in a

large scandal connected with the issuing of promissory notes at high interest rates without any backing. The conflict damaged the credibility of two of the most influential families in Bosnia, Pozderac and Dizdarevic, who were ousted by younger cadres. But, the younger Communists were not able to control the processes of national segregation that already had started in Bosnia.

Although Yugoslavia was decentralized, all the Yugoslav republics except Serbia were strongly centralized. This was a typical Communist model of ruling, which assumed interference in all aspects of life. This policy went hand in hand with the wishes of the Muslim population in Bosnia, who wanted to preserve/create a "special" Bosnian national identity. But, Bosnia was culturally and ethnically diverse and each region had specific differences. So, it was totally incorrect to prescribe the same rule of behavior for every corner of such a diverse country. For instance, all Bosnian children studied one year of the Cyrillic alphabet, and another the Latin alphabet, regardless of how many Serbs, Croats, or Muslims lived in certain region.[21] Even if the Serbs comprised 99 per cent of the population in some districts, they had to learn the Latin alphabet every second year. A similar situation existed with the Muslims and Croats. They had to learn the Cyrillic alphabet every second year even if they comprised 99 per cent of the population in some districts. Communists were actually engaged in a national building process, without paying attention to the fact that

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[20] In 1989, the leader of Croatian Communists, Stanko Stojcevic, a Croatian Serb, was replaced by the more liberal Ivica Racan.

the Bosnian Orthodox and Catholic populations had passed through a nation-building process one hundred and fifty years earlier. It was not possible to reverse that process.

The beginning of Serb-Croat quarrels horrified the Muslims, who realized that it might mean the end of a unified and unitary Bosnia, in which they were able to preserve their separate Muslim identity. Muslims were afraid of the possibility that if Bosnia were absorbed either by Serbia or by Croatia, they would become just a religious group once more. They had every reason to try to avoid a war, because they were the smallest and the weakest national group. In 1989 Milosevic had already made the decision about war, and the mistake of the Muslim's leadership was that they did not recognize it.

C. DEMOCRACY

In the summer of 1989, Serbs celebrated the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo battle against the Ottoman Turks, and Milosevic gave a notorious speech in which he announced the war. He finished the process of subjecting Yugoslavia to his control. Out of eight votes in the Federal presidency, he controlled four.

Slovenia did not waste time in protecting herself and she passed a new liberal constitution by which laws of the republic took precedence over Federal laws. Croatian Communists were careful not to take any provocative steps in

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[21] The Croatian language is written in Latin script exclusively, while the Serbs use Cyrillic script.

that direction, because of the Serbian minority in Croatia, but unofficially, they did not try to stop liberalization. Very soon, Slovenian and Croatian public life was enriched by new alternative movements and at the end of 1989, the first independent political parties appeared.[22]

Slovenian and Croatian Communists made a last reconciliatory effort at the Party Congress in January 1990, but when the Slovenian Communists walked out, it became clear that Yugoslavia was falling apart. Milosevic tried to persuade delegates from other republics to continue the Congress without the Slovenians but the Croatian Communists refused. Admiral Simic, a Croat from Bosnia and the Chief of the Communist Organization in the Yugoslav Army, made a very significant decision. He suggested a recess to enable further consultation. But this temporary break became the final meeting of the Yugoslav Communist Party.

Even before the Congress, Croatian Communists made the decision to go to free parliamentary elections. Slovenians immediately followed the Croatian decision and they announced the beginning of an electoral campaign. Elections were held in April 1990. Although both, Croatian and Slovenian Communists changed their affiliation and got rid of radicals, they lost the elections. Voters elected parties that promised to protect them from the growing Serbian nationalism, if needed, by secession – The Liberal-National Coalition in Slovenia

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[22] Most of the new political parties were established illegally, because the Croatian parliament passed the necessary laws in the spring of 1990.

and the popular national party called Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union) or HDZ in Croatia. The Croatian Serbs were organized in the Serbian Democratic Party (Srpska Demokratska Stranka) - SDS, which got the majority of its votes from Croatian Serbs. That party asked for a cultural autonomy of Croatian Serbs if Croatia remained in the Yugoslav Federation or political autonomy if Croatia seceded. Later, radicals in the party connected with Milosevic, started using much tougher rhetoric[23] and demanded the complete secession from Croatia and connection with Serbia. They were not bothered with the fact that there was not even a territorial link of predominantly Serbian populate parts of Croatia with Serbia. The link was established via the Bosnian Serbs in 1992.

In the spring of 1990, the Communist Parties in all Yugoslav republics disintegrated. The Communists tried to reorganize themselves and the majority decided to become parties of Social-Democratic orientation. A significant number also joined other political parties. The Serbian Communist Party became the Socialist Party of Serbia, and Bosnian and Croatian Communist Parties became the Parties of Democratic Change.

During the electoral campaign in Croatia and Slovenia, the Chief of the Communist Party in the Yugoslav Army, Admiral Simic (a Croat) suddenly died. That enabled the Serbian radicals to grab complete control of the Yugoslav

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[23] During the electoral meeting in Petrova Gora, Serbs frequently called the new leader of Croatian Communist Ivica Racan - Ustasha, in spite of fact that he was born in a Nazi camp in Germany.

Armed Forces. Even before it was known who would win the elections, the decision was made to seize the weapons of the Territorial Defense Forces[24] in these two republics. Slovenians were faster in seizing their weapons and they kept the bigger portion. In Croatia the Army seized everything. This event proved that the Army was not just anti-HDZ, but anti-Croatian, because it grabbed the weapons before the results of elections were known.

Free elections in Serbia and Monte Negro were postponed because of the relative loss of Milosevic's popularity in the first half on 1990. The situation in Bosnia became more complicated. Bosnian Communists decided to go with free elections, but they wanted to prevent the creation of national parties, because they were afraid that these national parties would destroy Bosnia. Afterwards, the Constitutional Court decided in favor of the creation of national parties, and in May of 1990 the Party of Democratic Action was registered. This was the first national party in Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose leader was recently released political prisoner, Alija Izetbegovic. Soon after, the major Serbian and Croatian national parties were established and it was "coincidental" that they had the same names like the major Croatian and Serbian parties in Croatia - HDZ and SDS.

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[24] Territorial Defense Forces were under the control of the Yugoslav republics, unlike the Federal Army, which was nominally under Federal control.

In the summer of 1990, Bosnia was in the middle of an electoral campaign. The political situation in Bosnia reflected the overall political situation in Yugoslavia.

Serbian nationalists in the SDS spoke about the inequality of the positions of Serbs in Bosnia, and about Serbian unity and so forth. Extremists from the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) were openly speaking about a Greater Serbia that would absorb Bosnia and much of Croatia.

The Croatian radicals from the Croatian Party of the Right (HSP) openly spoke about the union of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, and secession from Yugoslavia. They insisted on Muslim-Croat cooperation. The majority party of Bosnian Croats - HDZ proclaimed that Bosnian Croats would never accept living in a Serb dominated state.

The largest Muslim national party, the SDA, spoke in general terms about the need to preserve a special Bosnian identity, but it was very careful in responding to Serbian nationalists that had been tailoring Yugoslavia according to their wishes. The rhetoric of Alija Izetbegovic was rather soft and vague as far as the Bosnia relations with Serbia and Croatia are concerned. He was very careful not to say anything to provoke the Serbs. That was a completely inappropriate policy for the Bosnian political situation. A significant number of Muslims expected a much tougher course toward open Serbian nationalistic aspirations, and to some extent they were disappointed by Izetbegovic's rhetoric. Ordinary Muslims wanted a much closer alliance with Croats, and Croatian and

Muslim flags were seen tied together at electoral meetings. HDZ posters were printed with both the Croatian and Muslim symbols and later, a significant number of Muslims in the cities of Mostar and Bugojno voted for HDZ. Although Croats were the minority in these cities, HDZ won the elections.

On the whole, however the elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina were just another census. The people voted for the major national parties, and these got the majority of seats in Parliament. The parties agreed to form a ruling coalition, which lasted less than one year.

D. THE WARS IN SLOVENIA AND CROATIA

The situation in Croatia deteriorated rapidly after the elections. During one session, Croatian Serb Radoslav Tanjga named the Croatian Parliament, the Ustasha Sabor.[25] The stormy reaction from the Croatian representatives was just a good excuse to leave Parliament forever.

In August 1990, the Chief of Police in Knin refused to recognize the authority of the Minister of the Interior in Zagreb, and effectively started an armed insurgency. The Minister sent a special police force by helicopter to Knin to take over the police station in Knin, but the jet fighters of the Yugoslav Air Forces intercepted the helicopters and forced them to return to Zagreb. This was the first open interference by the Yugoslav Armed Forces in the Serb-Croat conflict on the Serbian side. The number of armed incidents between the

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[25] Sabor is the name of the Croatian Parliament, as Seim in Poland or Duma in Russia.

Croatian and Serbian villages in the districts with a Serbian majority increased rapidly.

The new Croatian authorities realized that a disarmed Croatia could not fight the Yugoslav Armed Forces. In September of 1990, they probably made the decision to buy weapons abroad and to strengthen their police forces. Police Forces were the only regular armed forces available for the defense of the republic.[26] Simultaneously, contacts with the International community were made to determine its reaction to the possibility of Croatian independence. The response was a negative one, and authorities changed public rhetoric by no longer speaking about a full Croatian independence but about a Yugoslav confederation of independent states. Milosevic simply answered that Croatia could be independent, but without the territories where Serbs lived.

The number of incidents in Bosnia was rather small in comparison with the electoral campaign in Croatia. Elections were held in December 1990 and Bosnia-Herzegovina got its first freely elected Parliament. Macedonia and Serbia also held elections, and in December 1990, all Yugoslav republics had free elected leaderships. It was their turn to try to find a new constitutional solution for Yugoslavia. In January 1991, they all agreed to try to find a solution acceptable for everyone in next six months. Croatia and Slovenia added that if the solution were not found, they would declare independence.

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[26] Belgrade accused Croatian authorities to of employing only Croats, but the truth was that in such a politically tense atmosphere, the Serbs refused to wear the Croatian badges, calling them Ustasha badges.

The tensions between Croatia and the Army were increasing daily and the leadership of Croatia was invited to Belgrade to clear up the problems. But, the Army Intelligence wanted to publicly compromise the Croatian leadership by presenting the findings about weapons being smuggled into Croatia. A deal was cut to stop provocative actions on both sides and the army would collect all illegally acquired weaponry.

Now when the Croats were presented in a negative light to the rest of Yugoslavia, the Serbs were free to do what they intended. In early spring of 1991, they tried to conquer a police station in Pakrac, Western Slavonia, but they were forced to retreat. One month later, they tried to conquer a famous resort, Plitvice, in Central Croatia, but after a short attack[27] they were forced to retreat again. The Army deployed its forces between the Croatian Police and the insurgents, but in effect they cooperated with the Serbs by securing their safe passage. The number of incidents was increasing rapidly in all areas where a significant number of Serbs lived. In early May, the Serbs set up an ambush of Croatian Police and killed twelve Policemen in Eastern Slavonia. The army played its role in every incident, pretending to be a buffer between the sides, but in reality fortifying the Serbian territorial conquest against Croatian villages.

Political battles were similar to those in the field. The leadership of the Yugoslav republics made no progress during six summits held in the first half of 1990. In the spring, there were three official propositions for a new constitutional

order of Yugoslavia. Serbia and Monte Negro[28] proposed a more centralized state, Croatia and Slovenia proposed a confederacy, while Bosnia and Macedonia proposed an "asymmetrical federation," in which Croatia and Slovenia would have more independence than other republics. But no one wanted to accept anyone else's proposal. Croatia and Slovenia held a referendum in which the population could vote for three official proposals and an overwhelming majority of the people voted for independence.

The situation in Serbia deteriorated suddenly when a demonstration against Milosevic escalated into street riots. The Serbian opposition protested against Milosevic's control over the mass media. The Yugoslav Army wanted to take advantage of this situation and almost staged a legal coup. Milosevic controlled four votes in the Yugoslav presidency, and only one vote was needed for the introduction of "extraordinary circumstances", effectively military dictatorship; but the Bosnian Serb, Bogic Bogicevic refused to vote for it, and the plan failed. Milosevic responded that Serbia would not obey Federal laws. Afterwards, he changed his mind and the Serbian representatives returned to the Federal Presidency.

In June of 1991, according to the Yugoslav constitution, the Serbian member of the Yugoslav Presidency, in a leading role, should have been

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[27] That was first incident of shooting with fatalities on both sides.

[28] After the "yogurt" revolution in October 1988, Monte Negro became nothing but a Serbian satellite.

replaced by a Croatian representative, but the Serbs refused to do that. A Constitutional crisis that started with abolishing the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina, reached its climax. That step assured that Croatia and Slovenia would carry out their decision from January 1991 and they both declared independence[29] from Yugoslavia on June 25, 1991. The next day, the war between Slovenia and the Yugoslav Army broke out. The International community stepped in at that moment.

The war in Slovenia lasted only ten days. The EU-troika[30] mediated the peace formalized in the Briuni Agreement, according to which the Yugoslav Army had to withdraw from Slovenia. In return, Croatia and Slovenia froze their decisions on independence for a three-month period. The European Community committed itself to mediate a solution during that period. On the other side, the Yugoslav Army, Croatia and Slovenia promised to refrain from military and other provocative actions.

But, the real war in Croatia just started. In early August 1991, the Yugoslav Army reinforced its forces in Croatia and started an open war against Croatia. Especially strong attacks were focused on the city of Vukovar in Eastern Slavonia, where the Serbs were the minority of the population. This

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[29] According to the Yugoslav Constitution of 1974, all republics had the right of self-determination (secession).

[30] The Troika consists of the past, present, and future president of EU commission.

region was a prosperous[31] area separated from Serbia by the Danube River. The Army also attacked to the South in the Dubrovnik region, where there were no Serbs at all. Maneuvering through Bosnia to encircle Dubrovnik, the Army burned several Bosnian Croatian villages, sending a clear message to the Bosnian Croats - the enemy was not just the Independent Republic of Croatia but Croats in general.

In September 1991, Croatia established the General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces - HV (Hrvatska Vojska). During September and October 1991, the Special Police and Volunteer Forces conquered several of the military stockpiles, which enabled additional mobilization. Every conquered stockpile meant a few more brigades of the new Croatian Army. By the end of year, the Croatian Army had almost 200,000 troops and the Yugoslav Army lost initiative. Actually, the Croatian Army liberated the previously occupied areas of its territory in Western Slavonia. In November 1991, the Yugoslav Army finished the destruction of Vukovar expelling 50,000 civilians to the free Croatian territory. That created the pattern of behavior used in the Bosnian war, later know as ethnic cleansing.

In December, the situation calmed down and Croatia and the Yugoslav Army signed a peace agreement in Sarajevo on January 3, 1992. Both sides agreed to bring the troops of the United Nations on contested Croatian territory.

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[31] Oil and fertile agricultural fields.

On January 15, 1992 the European Community recognized Croatia and Slovenia as independent states.

E. BOSNIA BEFORE THE WAR

The severe debates in the free elected Bosnian Parliament started from its establishment in December 1990. The government was formed as a coalition of major (Muslim, Serbian, and Croatian) parties, but political tensions in other parts of Yugoslavia reflected on Bosnia, and the government could hardly pass any law through Parliament without severe debates.

The serious problems started with negotiations between the presidents of the Yugoslav republics. Alija Izetbegovic, the new President of the presidency, had to represent the view of the Bosnian people during the debates but there were three views in Bosnia as to the future of the Yugoslav Federation.

The Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, gradually shifted his rhetoric toward radicalism. Bosnian Serbs were not satisfied with the way Izetbegovic represented their interests. Their leadership established a close relationship with Milosevic and with the officers of the Yugoslav Army in Bosnia in the first half of 1991, and that led to radicalization of their demands in Parliament.

Bosnian Croats were also dissatisfied and rather confused with Izetbegovic's balancing between them and the Serbs. Serbian behavior gave them enough evidence that the Serbs did not intend to make any compromises with anyone and that Bosnia was headed toward war. They took the Muslim-Croat alliance for granted, but Izetbegovic refused to formalize that alliance.

Izetbegovic did not want to take any serious steps that might in any way provoke the Serbs. On the other hand he was divided between his two roles, the leader of the Bosnian Muslims, and the leader of the republic. Sometimes he acted as though he wanted independence for Bosnia, and then rapidly changed his position. The political goal of the Bosnian Muslims was undoubtedly to preserve Bosnian independence and the unity of the republic,[32] but they could not achieve that alone. In February 1991, SDA and HDZ proposed the declaration of Bosnian sovereignty, but in March 1991, Izetbegovic pleaded for an asymmetrical Yugoslav Federation, in which Bosnia-Herzegovina would keep the same position. For Bosnian Croats, it would have been unacceptable if Bosnia had had stronger constitutional ties with Serbia, than with Croatia. But, Croatia was on her way to independence and for Bosnian Croats that was the only possible step.

Izetbegovic's chronic indecisiveness and strange political steps confused them. In July 1991 his decision was for Bosnia-Herzegovina to apply for membership in the Organization of Islamic Conference.[33] Croats also did not like his ideas on Bosnia as a civil state. This would leave the Croats without participation in the power, because they were the smallest national group in Bosnia-Herzegovina (17.8 per cent). Bosnian Croats could, to some extent,

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32 On February 27, 1991 Izetbegovic publicly said : " I would sacrifice peace for a sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina, but for that peace in Bosnia I would not sacrifice sovereignty."

33 An incredible step, in spite of fact that Christians, Serbs and Croats together (50 per cent) are the majority in Bosnia. Muslims are the biggest single group (44 per cent).

understand Izetbegovic's ignorance of the Croatian war, but what they resented him the most for was his ignorance of the attacks of the Yugoslav Army on Croatian villages in Bosnia.[34] In that moment, Izetbegovic acted not as the President of all Bosnians (including Croats), but as the President of Bosnian Muslims only. Bosnian Croats realized what could happen in the future to all of them, but Muslim leaders refused all their initiatives[35] to undertake any precautionary measures to protect the people against Serbian brutality. This was probably the moment when Izetbegovic lost his credibility with Bosnian Croats. Appeasing the Serbs, he scarified principles in exchange for a little temporary safety.

Izetbegovic's actions were reflective of the divisions among the Bosnian Muslims. Some of them were convinced that it would be possible to make an agreement with the Serbs although at the time Radovan Karadzic openly threatened[36] extermination of Muslim people. That group, led by Minister of the Interior, Alija Delimustafic, had already cooperated with the Yugoslav Army. Bosnian police secured the lines of logistic support for the Yugoslav Army that

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[34] The Yugoslav Army burned down several Bosnian Croat villages in the hinterland of the Dubrovnik area, but Izetbegovic avoided condemning it, saying the famous sentence: "This is not our war."

[35] Defense Minister Jerko Doko, a Bosnian Croat, proposed to Izetbegovic the mobilization of Territorial Defense Units, but he refused that idea. Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death Of A Nation* (TV Books Inc., distributed by Penguin USA, 1996), p.291.

[36] On October 15, 1991, Karadzic threatened that if the Muslims and Croats had voted for Sovereignty of Bosnia, the Muslim population would have disappeared.

was engaged in Croatia.[37] Later, that Minister of the Interior was dismissed, but his actions largely contributed to the estrangement of Muslim-Croat relations. The other group of Muslims, out of Izetbegovic's control, tried to make an 'historical agreement" in August 1991, with Milosevic. According to the *Belgrade Declaration*, Bosnia would remain in Yugoslavia with some guarantees for the Muslim minority. But, that was not what Izetbegovic wanted. His goal was an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina within Tito's borders, but he did not want to openly ask for that, in order not to provoke the Serbs. He wanted someone else to make that decision so that Serbs could blame them, not himself.

On the other hand, Izetbegovic's doubts about Croatian intentions became stronger after the rumors about a secret meeting between Tudjman and Milosevic in July 1991, at which they allegedly carved-up Bosnia. This meeting is usually the main argument for all political analysts of the events in the former Yugoslavia who like conspiracy theories. It is probably the main reason for the personal aversion of Izetbegovic toward Tudjman. On the other hand, Tudjman resented Izetbegovic's indecisiveness and his pleading within the International community for non-recognition of Croatia in December 1991, although

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[37] According to Aleksandar Vasiljevic, the head of the Yugoslav Army counter-intelligence, "He [Delimustafic] agreed to establish joint Bosnian police-Army patrols and checkpoints, on railways and roads to control traffic and prevent armed movements by paramilitaries, as well as to provide for real Army movements. Especially since the military needed to get through to Knin from Serbia and Montenegro to the war there. If they had not gotten through we would never have been able to fight. Bosnia was our corridor to Krajina" Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death Of A Nation* (TV Books Inc., distributed by Penguin USA, 1996), p.292.

Izetbegovic himself asked the International community on November 30, to extend the recognition to all Yugoslav republics.[38]

In December 1991, the International community put Izetbegovic's back to a wall: recognition was offered to everyone, if the majority of the people wanted that. Even before the referendum on independence, the Serbs announced a boycott. Actually, in the autumn of 1991, they already prepared for establishing their own Republic of Srpska Bosnia and Herzegovina within Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Yugoslav Army withdrew from Slovenia and Croatia, and later secured the borders of Bosnian Serb republic. It is not clear why Izetbegovic did not want to see that. It was so obvious. He did nothing to prepare his own people for the war that started in March 1992, which was even before the results of referendum were known.

In the period before the war in Bosnia, Muslim-Croat relations frequently changed. This was the consequence of differing political goals they had in mind, and the different strategies that were chosen to achieve them. Izetbegovic wished for an independent Bosnia, but he did not want to confront the Serbs, realizing how weak the Muslim position was.

The ideal option for Bosnian Croats was a "Great Croatia," which would consist of Croatia and Bosnia, but that was an impossible solution which did not survive World War II. The other solution, the partitioning of Bosnia, would make an unpleasant precedent for Croatia, whose borders were contested too. That

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[38] Ibid., p.216.

was why they were encouraged from Croatia to vote for an independent Bosnia. But, in their minds that independent Bosnia could not be Izetbegovic's unitary and civil state. They wanted a decentralized state that could ensure preservation of a separate Croatian identity. Unfortunately, Croats and Muslims were pushed to fight for an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina even before they started talks about its future constitutional organization. In effect, they fought for two different states – a centralized and decentralized Bosnia and Herzegovina. The International community, whose inconsistent policy toward the Yugoslav crisis only made things worse, did not recognize that problem.

F. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Western countries closely followed the development of the constitutional crisis in the former Yugoslavia, but primarily focused on the Soviet Union and its former allies. The United States and the European Community thought that the preservation of Yugoslavia would be the best solution for all Yugoslav nations, but they were ready to accept any peaceful solution. In the second half of 1990, the West was preoccupied with the crisis in the Gulf, and Yugoslavia was its second concern. The free elected leaderships of Croatia and Slovenia (April, May 1990) were unanimously discouraged by all western countries in their first talks about the possibility of international recognition.

When the situation in Yugoslavia deteriorated in the summer of 1991, the European Community and the United States chose a different approach. The European Community offered to give financial aid when the crisis was resolved,

while the United States cut down its present financial support until the crisis was resolved.

With the end of the Gulf war, American diplomacy had more time for the Yugoslav and East European problems. On the eve of the Slovenian and Croatian proclamation of independence on Jun 20, 1991, Secretary of State James Baker came to Belgrade to express American support of the liberal government of Premier Markovic and the unity of the country. The Army clique considered that to mean that they had free reign for military intervention in Slovenia. They did not pay attention to the warnings from the United States and the European Community, that they prefer to see a peaceful dissolution rather than a forceful unity.

When war broke out in Slovenia, the United States condemned the use of force, but they limited its actions on active participation in the United Nations Security Council and through the activities of the United States Embassy in Belgrade.

The European Community had just started its Common Foreign and Security Policy in accordance with the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty. When the Slovenian war broke out, the European Troika was traveling from Zagreb to Belgrade (Slovenian airports were blocked off) and finally mediated a truce signed on the Croatian Island of Briuni, by which the Yugoslav Army had to withdraw from Slovenia to Bosnia and Serbia. The Troika did not even try to

tackle the more complicated problems in Croatia. Bosnia was not on their mind at all.

As the situation in Croatia deteriorated, the European Community realized that the Troika was not an efficient way of dealing with all Yugoslav problems. At the end of August, the European Community declared the use of force in Yugoslavia illegal, and demanded that Serbia allow EC observers to come into Croatia. The EC also set up the arbitration commission of international jurists headed by French Lawyer Badinter to judge[39] the issues of succession among the republics. They also appointed a special mediator for Yugoslavia, former British diplomat Lord Peter Carrington. He quickly realized that Slovenia was not the problem at all, and more troubles could be expected in the upcoming days in Croatia and Bosnia. Carrington organized the first sessions for the chiefs of the Yugoslav republics in The Hag in September of 1991, trying to determine what kind of solution could satisfy the minimal of demands of every republic. His first problem was that he did not know what kind of mandate he got from the European Community. His only guidelines were the decisions of the Badinter Commission.

In October 1991, he proposed the effective confederation of six independent Yugoslav republics. Details would be worked out in working groups.

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[39] The first decision was that Croatia and Slovenia did not secede, but Yugoslavia fell apart and recommended that the Helsinki Charter of non-violation of borders should be applied to the borders of Yugoslavia. The population that did not want to stay in some republic should be given the option to move somewhere else. That decision turned Serbian public opinion against the European Community.

Special constitutional guarantees were made for minorities in Croatia, and Serbia. All three nations in Bosnia-Herzegovina would keep their constituent position. Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia accepted his proposal, but Serbia[40] and Slovenia were not satisfied with this solution. With the Yugoslav Army out of country, Slovenia was just a step away from full independence and she would accept only minimal ties with other Yugoslav republics. Carrington managed to find Slovenia a more flexible solution for her ties with the rest of Yugoslavia, but Serbia completely refused his proposal. Serbia was not ready to give such a degree of autonomy to Albanians in Kosovo, as she demanded for Serbs in Croatia. In the beginning of the session, it seemed that Milosevic, under international pressure, agreed to accept the right of self-determination for republics, not for the nation as he demanded before, but Milosevic finally showed his intentions in the following statement:

> Serbia could not accept the working groups continuing to proceed on the basis of the lowest common denominator of identified interests, and institutional arrangements. The conference should try to identify genuine common interests which could be defended in a common state. It was essential for all Serbs to live in one state, not in a number of independent republics bound by little more than interstate relations. If this was not accepted by the other republics, the right course would be to recognize those republics wishing it [independence], after having settled the question of the succession of Yugoslavia and after having agreed on border changes.[41]

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[40] Usually, Monte Negro closely followed the Serbian opinion.

[41] Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death Of A Nation* (TV Books, Inc., distributed by Penguin USA, 1996), p.192.

Actually, Serbia wanted to annex the territories of Croatia and Bosnia, and to be the sole legitimate successor of Yugoslav states. The only difference between a small Yugoslavia and the Greater Serbia would be in the name. Those who did not like that solution would be broken by military means.

In mid November, international public opinion turned against Serbia. Milosevic was recognized as the main obstacle to peace. During the summit of the European Union in Rome on November 8, 1991 - foreign ministers proposed economic sanctions against all Yugoslav republics until the crisis was resolved.

This British and French dominated decision at the European Union was on the track of Resolution 713 of the United Nations Security Council, sponsored by the same countries from September, 25 1991. They also undermined the Dutch proposal of interposing 30,000 troops in Croatia.[42]

The absence of moral grounds for these even-handed decisions only infuriated the public around the world, and especially in Germany. The German public had long been sympathetic toward the Croatian and Slovenian suffering and after these morally questionable decisions it put Foreign Minister Genscher under strong pressure to recognize Slovenia and Croatia immediately.

To apply the same pressure to all republics equally meant that Croatia and the other republics must make further concessions to the Serbs, over and above those proposed in Carrington's *General Settlement,* if they wanted to

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[42] Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), p.180.

survive. The Franco-British policy was not to annul openly the findings of the Badinter Commission,[43] but to apply enough pressure on other republics who would then accept the Serbian terms. In that case, the European Community could wash their hands, because the unfair agreement would be an inter-Yugoslav decision, not something imposed by the European Community.

Germany diplomacy disliked that policy, but in the beginning it did not try to break with the unity of the European Union. However, after these pro-Serb Franco-British decisions, Germany realized that in essence this policy lead to the acceptance of Serbian territorial conquest. If the German government continued to comply with the Franco-British dominated EC foreign policy, it could hardly survive the next election. During the meeting of the EC foreign ministers in Brussels on December 17, Genscher pressed the other colleges to recognize Slovenia and Croatia. They compromised and left to the Badinter Commission to recommend the republic eligible for recognition. Four republics applied for recognition, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Slovenia. The Badinter Commission set up as one of conditions for recognition, control of the borders, which Croatia could not fulfill without accepting the battle front lines as the permanent borders. Realizing that she was outwitted, Germany announced the recognition of Croatia unilaterally. Then, the European Community decided to recognize Slovenia and Croatia, but Britain and France got what they wanted

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[43] See p.55.

– a scapegoat that would bear responsibility for breaking the European Community's unity and for subsequent deterioration of conditions in Yugoslavia.

IV. MUSLIM-CROAT ALLIANCE 1992-1993

A. CARRINGTON-CUTILEIRO PLAN AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

In late 1991, Greater Serbia began to emerge on the map of Europe. The Croatian Serbs, supported by irregulars from Serbia proper and the Yugoslav Army, conquered almost 30 per cent of Croatian territory. Bosnia was deeply involved in the Croatian War in many different ways[44] and the political situation became rather explosive. In October 1991, Radovan Karadizic was threatening the extermination of the Muslim population if Bosnia became an Independent state. In spite of this threat, the Muslims and Croats passed the resolution on Bosnian sovereignty. In November, the SDA party demanded that the EC extend international recognition to all Yugoslav republics. Izetbegovic was afraid of Serbian retaliation and in November 1991, pledged in the EC for non-recognition of Croatia before settling the Bosnian problem.

In December 1991, Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia, applied to the Badinter Commission of the European Union for international recognition. With international recognition of Croatia and Slovenia in January 1992, Bosnian recognition became a realistic option. To satisfy the requirements for recognition, the Bosnian government had to have popular support for its request for recognition. The government announced the

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[44] See sub-Chapter "Bosnia Before The War."

referendum in March of 1992, but the Bosnian Serbs announced a boycott of that same referendum.

Previously in the fall of 1991, the Bosnian Serbs announced the organizing of their own territorial entity in Bosnia-Herzegovina, without defining the borders of that entity. When it became clear that the European Union had shifted its position toward the international recognition of the former Yugoslav republics, the Bosnian Serbs organized their own referendum. Their referendum was to confirm their decision to keep their illegal entity of the Republic of Srpska Bosnia-Herzegovina in Yugoslavia. On January 9, the Serbs proclaimed their entity (later renamed the Republic of Srpska) to be a part of the Yugoslav Federation.

Realizing how explosive the situation in Bosnia was, the International community tried to facilitate a constitutional agreement for Bosnia-Herzegovina, even before the result of Muslim-Croat referendum was officially known. The task of mediation was given to Lord Carrington, a special envoy of the EC to the former Yugoslavia and to Portuguese Ambassador Jose Cutileiro. They proposed the administrative-territorial reorganization of Bosnia starting from the Bosnian ethnic map. The country would have been reorganized according to the model existing in Switzerland - Bosnian districts would have become ethnic cantons. Carrington and Cutileiro used very simplified principles for the determination of ethnic cantons. For instance, if in some cantons there lived even a small majority of Serbs, the canton would be Serbian. They were not

bothered with the fact that Muslims and Croats, who together represented a majority in some canton, would not like to live in a Serbian canton (see Figure 1).

Carrington-Cutileiro (Lisbon) Plan

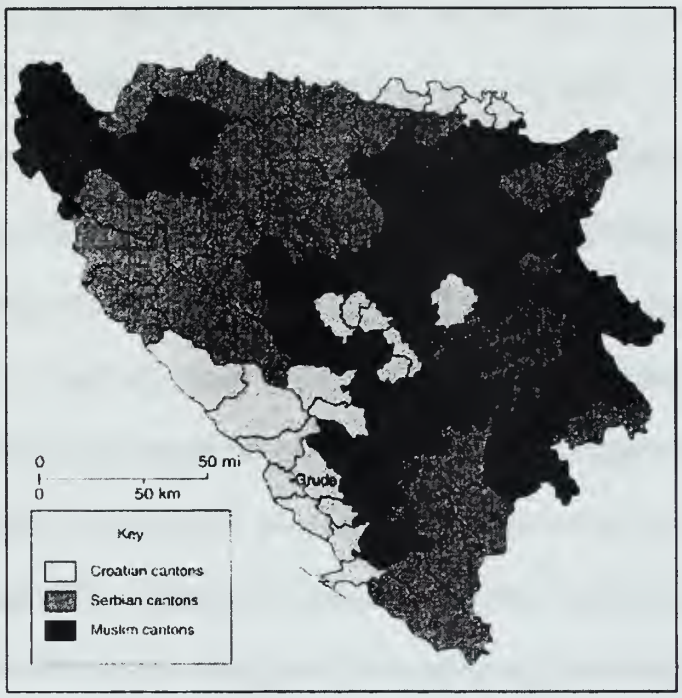

Figure 1

Source: Lee Bryant, "Bosnia-Herzegovina," *War Report* (November/December 1992), p.12.

This was the moment when serious political differences between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats appeared. Bosnian Muslims wanted to keep the unitary structure of post-World War II Bosnia that would assure their domination in the country. They did not trust either the Serbs or the Croats, especially in light of rumors about the agreed carve-up of Bosnia between them.

On the other hand, being the smallest Bosnian nation (17.8%), Bosnian Croats tried to avoid political domination by two other peoples. Their ideal option was a Croatian-Bosnian union, but on the eve of international recognition of Bosnia, that option was not a real one. Therefore, Bosnian Croats tried to achieve, at any expense, some degree of autonomy in the predominantly Croatian areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Under international pressure in Lisbon, all three sides made some concessions, and they generally agreed to preserve the external borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina and to carry out the internal partition on an ethnic basis. The talks should have continued until the territorial division was agreed upon, but Izetbegovic changed his mind after returning to Sarajevo. Powerful members of the SDA party rejected the ethnic partition of Bosnia and forced him to abolish the Lisbon Agreement. Izetbegovic's indecisiveness would continue throughout the next three years. In this case, by changing his mind Izetbegovic turned down the best offer he ever got. Every ensuing proposal for the peace agreement in Bosnia would be worse.

Disappointed by Izetbegovic's new position, leaders of the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Croats met secretly in Graz, Austria, trying to achieve bilateral agreement. But, they achieved nothing except fueling old rumors about a Serb-Croat carve-up of Bosnia. Serbs felt they were too strong to make concessions to other nations. They already prepared themselves for war.

B. THE WAR

Almost immediately, the first incidents began in the northern part of the country. The Serbs and Croats fought in Bosanski Brod. A similar situation began in the Mostar region in the south of the country. In the northeast, the Serbian irregulars massacred Muslims in Bijeljina.

The situation was deteriorating rapidly. Surprisingly, the presidency of the republic issued a statement that they still considered the Yugoslav Army to be the Bosnian Army and that the Army would protect the Bosnian people. The Bosnian Croats were shocked after this statement. They did not understand that political step, because it had become clear during the Croatian war that the Army had become the Serbian Army.

The result of the referendum on independence (held from February 28 until March 1) was known in advance. The Serbs largely boycotted referendum but some voted for staying in Yugoslavia; Muslims and Croats voted for Bosnian independence. On April 6, the EC recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state. The same day war started in Sarajevo. Very soon, Serbian troops occupied all strategic hills around the city. In practice, the Serbs did not need to conquer anything. They just replaced the badges of the Yugoslav Army with Serbian badges. All Yugoslav Army officers born in Bosnia were transferred from Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia to Bosnia.[45] The Yugoslav Army in

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[45] "Milosevic and I were talking about it... We instructed the General Staff to redeploy troops and to transfer all those born in Bosnia to Bosnia and withdraw those born in Serbia and Montenegro to Serbia and Montenegro... [By the time of recognition], I think, eighty-five percent

Bosnia became the Army of the Bosnian Serbs. But, different Serbian militias, which had had fighting experience during the Croatian War, committed most of the terrible crimes.

By the end of the summer of 1992, the Serbs conquered almost two-thirds of Bosnia. The Muslim population was expelled from almost all areas where the Serbs and Muslims had lived intermixed before the war. With help from Serbia proper, the Serbian forces almost fully controlled the Drina Valley - a natural border between Serbia and Bosnia with several important power plants. In Eastern Bosnia, Muslim resistance continued in the small cities of Gorazde, Srebrenica, and Zepa. They became thorns in Serbia's side. In Western Bosnia, only the Bihac enclave survived. All other cities were ethnically cleansed. In the summer of 1992, the Serbs established concentration camps for Muslims and Croats in the area of Prijedor. Those non-Serbs, who avoided the concentration camps, were later expelled. The situation in Central Bosnia (Zenica, Travnik) was a little bit better. Central Bosnia with the Tuzla enclave in the northwest, remained the only area of free peace in the Bosnian territory under Muslim control.

Sarajevo was encircled. The Serbs conquered all the suburban areas where a significant number of Serbs lived (Hadzici, Ilidza, Ilijas, Rajlovac, Lukavica, etc.). Eastward from Sarajevo in Pale, the Serbs established a

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of them were from Bosnia," said Branko Jovic in Laura Silber's and Alan Little's, *Yugoslavia: Death Of A Nation* (TV Books, Inc., distributed by Penguin USA, 1996), p.218.

temporary capitol. There were no routes into or out of Sarajevo. Together with the free enclaves in Eastern Bosnia, Sarajevo began starving.

Bosnian Croats entered the war a little bit better organized than the Bosnian Muslims. The Bosnian Croats got the clear message from the war in Croatia. They knew what kind of treatment they could expect in the future from the Serbian Army and they tried to induce the Muslims to organize the joint resistance through Territorial Defense Units.[46] Having failed in this attempt, they turned to their kinsmen in Croatia. The Republic of Croatia helped them to organize the areas of defense where a significant number of Croats lived. So, Bosnian Croats had only two significant military formations in the beginning of the war - the HVO and the HOS (Hrvatske Oruzane Snage or Croatian Armed Forces). These units existed until the winter of 1992, at which time the HOS units were either dismissed or merged with the HVO units. The HVO units were better organized and equipped than the military forces of the Bosnian Muslims, but these units were also organized on the territorial principle and a majority of them were able to defend only their own villages.

Such units were not able to resist the well-organized Serbian military force, and the Croats were defeated in the Kupres area in April of 1992. On June 16, 1992 Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina signed a formal military alliance, which legalized the military assistance of the Croatian Army to Muslim and Croat troops in the border areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the summer of 1992, the

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[46] Ibid., p.52.

Croats successfully liberated the east bank of the river Neretva and the city of Mostar. In the Posavina region, close to the northern Bosnian-Croatian border, the Croatian troops controlled a large part of the Bosnian territory cutting the connection between the Banja Luka (Serb dominant) region and Serbia. But, under strong international pressure, the Croatian Army had to limit its assistance in the Posavina region and joint Serbian troops (from Serbia and Bosnia) broke the notorious Posavina corridor, which connected Banja Luka and the Krajina region with Serbia. The Bosnian Croats were driven over the river Sava to Croatia. Having secured supplied lines, the Serbs conquered Jajce in Central Bosnia. The city was defended by a joint Muslim-Croat defense, but because of deteriorated Muslim-Croat relations in Central Bosnia, it did not get help for a long time and finally fell into Serbian hands.

By the end of 1992, the Serbs had conquered almost 70% of the Bosnian territory, and kept it almost three years without significant changes.

C. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Refusing to mobilize, in order not to provoke the Serbs, President Izetbegovic put the destiny of the Muslim people in the hands of the International community. Unfortunately, the International community did very little to protect his people and Bosnia-Herzegovina from Serbian aggression.

From the beginning of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, the actions of the international community reflected an inconsistent approach. Its policy wavered from support for the territorial integrity in Yugoslavia (spring 1991), to

the decisions of the Badinter Commission (August 1992), to the collective punishment of all Yugoslav republics by imposing arms and economic embargoes (September and October of 1991), even as Serbia was designated as main obstacle to peace. It then wavered to the international recognition of Croatia and Slovenia (later Bosnia), but at the same time denied them the right to self-defense which led to the violation of the UN Charter. Almost all decisions and actions of the international community were driven by current events on the ground, rather than by some firmly established policy.

Apparently, the problem was the absence of leadership. The United States (Bush Administration) ceded the problem to the European Community (Union). But the foreign policy of the European Union was set in list of English, French, or German national interest. That is why those decisions were so inconsistent. These sometimes worked in favor of the Serbs, sometimes in favor of the Croats or Muslims. Because of such inconsistencies, the European Community lost its credibility in the eyes of the players on the ground, giving them reason to believe that they could do whatever they wanted (without being punished).

In May of 1992, the United Nations recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina as a full-fledged member of the international community, but its "decision to recognize was not accompanied by a commitment to follow through with the consequences of recognition that flowed from the UN Charter and international law. The consequences were to guarantee the integrity and inviolability of the states that

were recognized.[47] The economic sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Monte Negro), introduced by Security Council of the United Nations at the end of May 1992, were the only effective step undertaken by the international community against the Serbs. By withdrawing diplomatic personnel from Belgrade, the international community placed Belgrade in complete isolation.

The extension of the UNPROFOR mandate from Croatia to Bosnia only complicated the different diplomatic efforts. It is very hard to resist the impression that Britain and France launched the UN mission in Bosnia and other humanitarian actions to prevent military action, because they had troops on the ground. "From July till November 1992, they [Britain and France] objected, stalled and weakened each resolution being pressed by the United States that involved grater use of military power."[48]

Finally in late August of 1992, the European Community (supported by the UN) organized London Conference, which was the most ambitious international summit on Bosnia. The Conference condemned the role of Serbia in the Bosnian crisis, but also enabled the Serbs to eschew the international isolation. The conference established the standing Peace Conference for former

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[47] Zalmay M. Khalizad, "Lessons from Bosnia" (RAND, 1993).

[48] Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), p. 297.

Yugoslavia, which would be co-chaired by UN envoy Cyrus Vance and Lord David Owen.

In the winter and spring of 1993, the humanitarian crisis reached its climax. Sarajevo and the enclaves in the east of the country were on the brink of starvation. Above all, the Serbs launched their final attacks against the eastern enclaves. Pushed by the promise of the commander of the UN troops, the UN Security Council proclaimed the establishment of the UN safe areas. But, there were no UN forces to protect those areas. Apparently, the international community showed no will to punish Serbian crimes. The Muslims and the Bosnian Croats understood the message.

D. ALLIANCE THAT NEVER WAS

Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats were pushed into a military alliance because both nations were victims of Serbian aggression. But, the political leadership of these two nations never tried to determine common political goals for their alliance. That was not possible, because they did not have common political goals, but only one basic goal - to survive Serbian aggression.

Both nations harbored deep suspicions about each other's intention. Muslims suspected Croatians of secret negotiations with Serbs, while Croats resented the Bosnian Muslim role in the Croatian war, which the Croats considered a stab in the back. As far as contacts with the Serbs were concerned, the truth was probably that no nation had "clean hands." But, the most problematic aspect in the relations between the Bosnian Muslims and the

Bosnian Croats was their completely opposite views about the future organization of the Bosnian state. The Muslims wanted a unitary Bosnian State organized on the principle of one-man/one-vote, while the Croats could only accept a decentralized political system that would guarantee their rights as the smallest Bosnian nation. Events pushed them into an uneasy military alliance before they could determine what they would fight for.

Bosnian Croats had been criticized many times for their excessively close relations with Croatia proper. But, the circumstances in Bosnia in 1992 left them no choice. The Bosnian Croats realized that they had to protect themselves. Bosnian Croats were completely dependent on logistic support from Croatia. Humanitarian, military and all other aid came from Croatia. On the one hand, the ideal political solution for Bosnian Croats assumed that establishing strong institutional connections with Croatia was what was needed. These war-driven events only played into the hands of those factions that wanted to be absorbed by Croatia. Banovina Croatia, or the "Independent State of Croatia" from World War II, was the ideal territorial solution for them, but Bosnia-Herzegovina became an independent state and the minimal political option they could accept was a strong territorial autonomy for the predominantly Croatian areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina. That option looked realistic for those who lived close to the Croatian border, but many of them lived intermixed with Serbs and Muslims and they were afraid of being "unprotected" in the predominantly Serb or Muslim

areas.[49] But, by the beginning of the Bosnian war, the political significance of Bosnian Croats who lived on homogenous territories increased, because they were able to mobilize more men into the military units. The Croats who lived in small isolated communities or in big Muslim or Serb cities were the majority of the Croatian population in Bosnia, but they were not able to organize significant military units. In some areas (cities) they did it, and surprisingly survived throughout much of the war. Their political significance was decreased during the war.

Even before the beginning of the war, the political significance of the Croats who lived in homogenous areas was significantly increased. It was reflected in the replacement of the chief of the main Bosnian Croat party - HDZ. Mate Boban, who lived in the predominantly Croatian Western Herzegovina, replaced Stjepan Kljuic, who lived in Sarajevo. After the liberation of Mostar, the political importance of Croats in Herzegovina increased, because it was the only large city in Bosnia-Herzegovina under Croatian control. So, the Bosnian Croats decided to capitalize on their military strength in political life. Because the military strength of the Bosnian Muslims was on a low level, the Croats could ignore their political opinion. They thought they had full rights and enough strength to continue the process started by the European Community in Lisbon in February - i.e. the ethnic partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina. On July 2, 1992

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[49] In the case of autonomy, when the Croats were exclusive sovereigns in areas where they were the majority of the population, they would lose the right to be a sovereign nation in areas where the Serbs or Muslims were majority of the population.

the Bosnian Croats proclaimed the establishment of the Croatian Community Herzeg-Bosnia.

The Muslim reactions and the reactions of international observers were strongly negative. Though the Croats tried to persuade everyone that with the establishment of Herzeg-Bosnia they just tried to organize their civil life in a free Bosnian territory[50] which was really chaotic, most observers compared Herzeg-Bosnia[51] with the notorious Republic of Srpska. The truth is probably the following: The Bosnian Croats had no intentions of seceding from Bosnia in that moment, but Herzeg-Bosnia was for them, a kind of insurance policy at a time when all other options about the future of Bosnia were opened. They probably thought: "If Bosnia survived, good - we will have an autonomous region. If Bosnia is stillborn, good - we will join Croatia."

This step by the Bosnian Croats only increased the old tensions between Muslims and Croats. The Croats accused the Muslims of avoiding the burden of defense of the country, while in political life, the Muslims-dominant government took the prerogative to speak in the name of the Bosnian Croats. In some areas, the Croats even helped to equip the Muslim units, because they were over-

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[50] Unlike the Republic of Srpska, which the Serbs considered to be independent from Bosnia, all official documents and seals of the Herzeg-Bosnia carried the title "Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina - Croatian Community Herzeg-Bosnia."

[51] Both entities had no foothold in the Bosnian Constitution, but from the Fall of 1991, no political decision in Bosnia was made with the consensus of all three constitutional nations. After all, the legal terms of all government officials expired in December 1991, but Alija Izetbegovic and others convinced the International Community that he and his government spoke for all citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

stretched. The Croats thought that their strong military engagement gave them stronger political rights. Because the Croatian forces solely liberated the cities of Mostar, Stolac, and Capljina, the Croats thought they had the exclusive right to establish political authorities in these cities. Actually, the Croats even accused some Muslims in Stolac of collaborating with the Serbs in the spring of 1992.

The situation became even worse after the fall of Jajce. Both, Muslims and Croats were blaming each for the fall of the city. The tensions became stronger, when 40,000 Muslim people from Jajce came to Travnik and other cities changing ethnic balance in Central Bosnia.

Political tensions and several incidents on the ground created the conditions for the Muslim-Croat war. The international community did nothing to reestablish a Muslim-Croat partnership. Quite to the contrary, decisions made in the spring of 1993 convinced the Muslim and Croat leadership that the independent Bosnia and Herzegovina were stillborn, which triggered the Muslim Croat war.

V. MUSLIM-CROAT WAR 1993-1994

A. VANCE-OWEN PEACE PLAN

After the London Conference[52] in late August of 1992, David Owen took the place of the EU mediator, Peter Carrington. He continued working with the UN mediator, Cyrus Vance, toward a comprehensive solution for the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. The London Conference gave new impetus to diplomatic efforts by establishing the International Conference of former Yugoslavia in Geneva on September 3, 1992. Mediators shuttled from capitol to capitol in the former Yugoslav republics, now independent states, trying to discover the political least common denominator acceptable for all sides.

The beginning of the Bosnian war was also the beginning of the presidential campaign in the United States. The Democrat candidate, then Governor Bill Clinton, presented a different, more determined approach toward the Bosnian Crisis[53] and especially toward the Serbs. Clinton pleaded for direct military action. President Bush attacked him because of his inexperience in foreign policy, but took up his proposal for denying military flights over Bosnia.

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[52] See p.70.

[53] On July 12, he said, "The United States should take the lead in seeking UN Security Council authorization for air strikes against those who were attacking the relief effort. The USA should be prepared to lend appropriate military support to that operation. We should make clear that the economic blockade against Serbia would be tightened, not only on weapons but also on oil and other supplies that sustain the renegade regime of Slobodan Milosevic. European and US naval forces in the Adriatic should be given authority by the UN to stop and search any that might be

This idea was later passed through the Security Council of the United Nations as an official resolution.

In Europe, Clinton's words had a different impact. During preliminary meetings with the leaders of the European countries, when Owen and Vance tried to determine how far Europe was ready to go in the Bosnian crisis, French President Francois Mitterrand specifically warned mediators of "the danger of aggressive force[54] against the Serbs and ruled out airs strikes." This was completely in line with the previous Franco-British "equal approach" attitude toward all sides in the conflict. In the situation when one side was armed to the teeth, and others were counting every bullet, such equality meant tacit support of the stronger (Serbian) side. On the other hand, after international recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina it would be very hard to justify her partition between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, which would essentially mean the creation of a Greater Serbia, a Greater Croatia, and an independent Muslim state. So, having this in mind, Owen and Vance proposed a new constitutional solution and administrative reorganization of Bosnia-Herzegovina - known as the Vance-Owen Peace Plan.

The Plan presented at a Conference in Geneva on January 2, 1993 consisted of three main papers and one annex with interim solutions. According

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carrying contraband heading for Serbia and her ally Montenegro." David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995), p.13.

[54] Mitterrand was so eager to prove that Sarajevo could be used for humanitarian transports, and that air strikes were not needed to support the delivery of food that he flew there at great personal risk at the end of July 1992.

to the Vance-Owen Peace Plan, Bosnia was supposed to be a decentralized state with ten provinces. Provinces were not designated with national names, but they were organized on an ethnic principle. Sarajevo was supposed to be a special district with multinational authorities. The plan would annul the major Serbian territorial conquest, but it also confirmed the ethnic partition of Bosnia (see Figure 2).

Comparing the Vance-Owen Peace Plan to the Carrington-Cutileiro Peace Plan, it must be said that the new plan corrected some mistakes made in Carrington-Cutileiro Plan, but the biggest flaw in the plan was in the territorial simplification of the situation in central Bosnia. The authors took the Muslim-Croat alliance for granted and joined ethnically mixed districts in central Bosnia with the predominantly Croatian districts in Western Bosnia-Herzegovina, which resulted in creating one big, predominately Croatian district. The plan also required the Serbian withdrawal from large parts of predominantly Muslim territory in Eastern Bosnia, but not from the city of Brcko. The authors obviously took into account the military power of Bosnian Serbs (they obtained some territories where they were not the majority of the population), the wishes of the international community (the solution that can be implemented), and the wishes of Bosnian Muslims (not to create either the Serbian or Croatian republic in Bosnian state). So, the Croats had to give up Herzeg-Bosnia, the Serbs had to give up the Republic of Srpska, and the Muslims had to give up the unitary Bosnian state.

Vance-Owen Plan

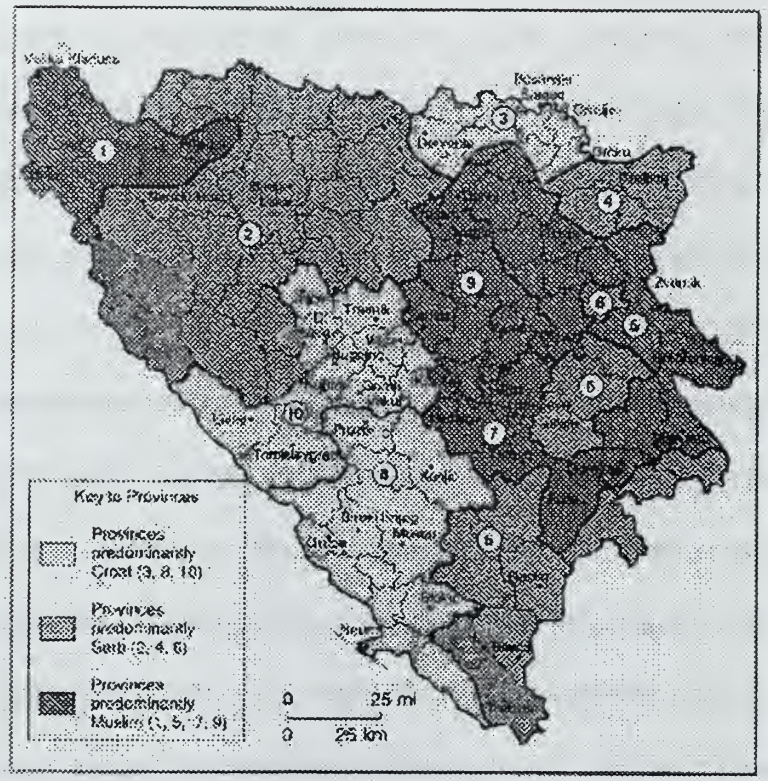
Key to Provinces
Provinces predominantly Croat (3, 8, 10)
Provinces predominantly Serb (2, 4, 6)
Provinces predominantly Muslim (1, 5, 7, 9)
0 25 mi
0 25 km

Figure 2

Source: Klemencic, Mladen. *Boundary and Territory Briefing.* International Boundary Research Unit, Department of Geography, University of Durham, United Kingdom. 1994.

Surprisingly, the strongest opposition did not come from the Serbian side, which would have given up almost 40 per cent of the conquered territory, but from the Muslims. Alija Izetbegovic endorsed the constitutional principles, but the maps were totally unacceptable for him. He accused the mediators of creating maps that would ratify the Serbian "ethnic cleansing" and effectively prevent the return of refugees. Although he did not say that, he was not satisfied with solutions in central Bosnia and Northern Herzegovina. Predominantly

Muslim districts of Central Bosnia and Northern Herzegovina, such as Konjic, Jablanica, Donji Vakuf, and Gornji Vakuf, became Croatian provinces which additionally increased the tensions between Muslims and Croats, who were already on the brink of war.

The distribution of the population in Central Bosnia looked like a tiger's skin. There was no district with a significant majority of the population of one nation (above 66 per cent), and only few of them had over 50 per cent of the population of one nation. The mediators could not create a predominantly Muslim or Croat district in Central Bosnia by redrawing the borders of the districts, because unlike those parts of Bosnia that were ethnically homogenized by the Serbian territorial conquest, Central Bosnia still had the old mixed ethnic structure intact. The proposed solution, which simply joined Central Bosnia to the predominantly Croatian part of the country, infuriated the Muslims, and they refused to sign the Vance-Owen Plan. The mediators thought that it would be much easier to convince Bosnian Muslims in Central Bosnia to live in a Croat dominated province, than to convince Bosnian Croats to live in a Muslim dominated province. Unfortunately, the Muslim-Croat relations in Central Bosnia were so bad at the moment that it would be hard to do that any way.

The Serbs rejected the constitutional principle, but accepted the most difficult part to negotiate - the maps - as a good basis for starting negotiations. Apparently, Karadzic left Izetbegovic alone to be "the black sheep." The Croats accepted everything proposed by the Vance-Owen Plan.

The mediators turned toward the influential members of the international community and asked them to press Izetbegovic to accept the plan to isolate Serbs. The Russians accepted the idea and proposed the strong statement of the Security Council, urging the parties to accept the plan. The statement was endorsed by all missions in the UN, except the United States. The American mission was cautious and suspicious of the Russians' motives. That was a very tense moment for the United States mission in the United Nations, because during the next ten days the new administration was to come to power, which would definitely have a much more pro-Bosnian attitude. The United States' mission issued a rather ambiguous statement about the Vance-Owen Peace Plan and according to Lord Owen,[55] "... some in the US State Department were encouraging Izetbegovic to seek changes in the map which we knew were not negotiable and in all probability they too knew were not negotiable."

In spite of American reluctance, international pressure was fruitful and during the next weeks the Muslims and Bosnian Serbs signed the constitutional principles, while the Croats and the Serbs signed a cease-fire. But, there was no final agreement.

Mediators then decided to move the negotiations to New York and to meet the new American administration with all of the details of the plan. But, the reports after the unified meeting of Secretary General Buthros Ghali, the new Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and the mediators were rather

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[55] David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995), p.94.

disappointing. The Secretary General expressed his ambivalence, while Warren Christopher had "problems with the map."[56] Most of the media reported that the United States refused to back the Vance-Owen Peace Plan.

During the next few months, mediators continued with negotiations by slightly changing the map in order to accommodate the Muslims and the US administration. Izetbegovic was close to signing the plan, but that shifted Karadzic's opinion toward complete rejection. Now, the attention of the international community was focused on the Serbs. The next step in that direction was tightening the sanctions and blocking the Yugoslav assets, which was endorsed by the resolution of the United Nations. The other problem for mediators was how to establish a credible implementation force without the support of the United States.

In the United States, there was a fierce public debate whether to abolish the United States armed embargo against the Muslims unilaterally or to use the military force and to impose a peace solution. The military was strongly opposed to involvement in the Bosnian Crisis without seeing clear political objectives. Above all they were opposed to being involved in the UN mission under French command. The Vietnam syndrome had also played its role.[57]

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[56] Ibid., p.108.

[57] Mislav Burdelez, *The Vietnam Syndrome and the conflict in former Yugoslavia* (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 1996).

The situation on the ground was deteriorating rapidly. The Serbian military commander, who was opposing the agreement, attacked the eastern enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa and they were about to fall. Armed incidents between Muslims and Croats were significantly escalating in Central Bosnia and the situation was about to explode, but the focus of the international community was on the humanitarian crisis in Eastern Bosnia.

On March 25, 1993, after waiting for 5 hours for Izetbegovic, he and Boban reached an agreement about interim arrangements and the provincial maps. His habitual indecisiveness would continue into the future. Mediators pressed the Croats and the Muslims to implement the agreement in areas under their control, but that idea would remain unfulfilled especially in the light of increasing Muslim-Croat tensions. The Croats tried to take advantage of the provisions of the Vance-Owen Plan by introducing the joint command structure. The Minister of Defense, Croat Bozo Rajic, made a unilateral[58] decision that assumed that all Croatian military units would be subordinate to Muslim command in the Vance-Owen provinces with Muslim majority, and all Muslim units would be subordinate to Croatian command in the Croatian provinces. It would mean that all Muslim units in Central Bosnia would be subordinate to the Croatian Command, which was almost unimaginable in the light of the strong tensions on the ground.

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[58] Misha Glenny, *The Third Balkan War* (London, New York: Penguin, 1996), p. 229.

The situation exploded in the middle of April of 1993. That was the moment when Muslim authorities in Sarajevo probably made the decision to give up on the Vance-Owen Peace Plan and to make some gains on the ground. They were probably encouraged by the indirect support of the new United States administration and some Muslim officials even hoped to achieve direct American intervention in Bosnia. In the meantime they turned to the weakest party in the Bosnian conflict - the Bosnian Croats. Conflict quickly spread over Central Bosnia. On April 16, the General Staff of the ABIH (Armija Bosne i Herzegovine - Muslim dominant Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina) ordered a general attack on the Croatian enclaves in Central Bosnia.[59] The Croats in Central Bosnia were surrounded until April 19. The Muslim forces tried to conquer the armed factories in Vitez and Novi Travnik, which were under Croatian Control and to gain control over the roads crossing the territories under Croatian control. Unfortunately, due to bad discipline and a general lack of professionalism, the heaviest casualties were among civilians.[60] This conflict remained in the shadows of heavy battles and crimes committed in Eastern Bosnia. The local commanders of the UN troops were successfully calming down the tensions

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[59] These documents were revealed during the trial in The Hague to the Commander-in-Chief of Croatian Forces in Central Bosnia, General Tihofil Blaskic during the period between September 11 until October 11, 1998. <http:www.hina.hr> [Access October 20, 1998]

[60] The International War Crime Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague accused 7 Bosnian Croats of different war crimes committed against Muslim civilians in Central Bosnia. The most famous of them is the Commander-in-Chief of the Bosnian Croat forces in Central Bosnia during that time; later the Chief of General Staff of Bosnian Croat forces HVO, General Tihofil Blaskic.

between the Muslims and the Croats until the summer of 1993. But, in June of 1993, this local conflict became a full-scale war between the Muslims and the Croats in Central Bosnia and Western Herzegovina as well.

B. CONTAINMENT

Until April of 1993, Izetbegovic formally accepted the Vance-Owen Peace Plan, probably because he felt that Karadzic would never accept it. The pressure of the international community was turned on to the Serbs, and soon it produced some results. Milosevic accepted the plan and tried to persuade Karadzic to do the same. Milosevic did not like the plan, but he tried, at any expense, to avoid the financial and other sanctions imposed by the international community. He pressed Karadzic and his clique very hard, but they managed to escape Milosevic's pressure by ceding to the decision of the "Parliament" of the Republic of Srpska. To Milosevic's surprise, the "Parliament" rejected the plan. He lost control over the Bosnian Serbs. In the very least, the Vance-Owen Peace Plan and the sanctions split the Serbs.

The mediators realized that they must expose the Bosnian Serbs to the direct pressure of the international community, including their traditional allies, the Russians and the Greeks. In early May, the mediators persuaded the Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis to host a summit, at which the international community would convince the Bosnian Serbs to accept the agreement. The meeting started on May 1, 1993 and continued for three days until the Bosnian Serbs, exposed to pressure and open threats, conditionally signed the plan.

The session of the Bosnian Serb "Parliament" started immediately upon return of all the officials from Greece. Karadzic held a neutral speech leaving the decision to the members of Parliament, who formally did not reject the plan, but decided to organize a referendum on that issue. The result was the same. Milosevic responded with sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs, trying to ease the international pressure on his country.

After the rejection of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan, Warren Christopher went to Europe to engage the allies in a more determined approach toward the Bosnian Crisis. Christopher suggested four possible ways to continue dealing with the Bosnian crisis: (1) increased sanctions, (2) an enforced cease-fire, (3) air strikes, and (4) lifting the arms embargo.[61] The United States administration favored the fourth option, but the Europeans still did not think that the Vance-Owen Peace Plan had failed. Soon, The French tried to pass the United Nations resolution but the Americans issued a statement that Secretary Christopher was discussing other measures in Europe. Obviously, the United States moved on a different track. The Europeans did not recognized that the new American administration, unlike Bush's administration, was no longer willing to cede the leading role in the Bosnian Crisis to them. After the European policy failed, the United States tried a different approach.

In those days, the United States started new diplomatic initiatives with France, the United Kingdom, and Russia. The new policy should have been

announced on May 22, 1993, but the whole story was announced the day before in the New York Times under the huge title: "United States and Russia Agree on Strategy Accepting Serbian Gains for Now." David Owen depicted these events as "depressing from the European Community viewpoint, jubilant from Pale, despairing from Sarajevo and cynical from Belgrade ... It was bizarre and, for me personally, exasperating that the United States, who had been against the Vance-Owen Peace Plan map for favoring the ethnic cleansing, was now advocating a map that allowed the Serbs to keep more territory. "[62]

The "containment" policy was introduced as the "Joint Action Plan" by the United States, France, Russia, the UK and Spain (temporary member of the Security Council at that time) on May 22, 1993. The Joint Action Plan was aimed toward sealing the Bosnian borders to prevent incursions or military support from neighboring states and establishing six safe areas. The Muslims were shocked and immediately rejected the plan, but the Serbs cheered the plan "as the first sober public statement by the West."[63]

All three sides recognized the importance of the new policy, which basically allowed them to keep as much land as they could conquer. Izetbegovic

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[61] David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995), p.160.

[62] Ibid., p.169.

[63] Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death Of A Nation* (TV Books, Inc., distributed by Penguin USA, 1996), p.289.

said that the world did not leave the Muslims too much of a choice.[64] In spite of the fact that the mediators tried to induce the implementation of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan at least among the Muslims and the Croats and push them toward mutual negotiations, these efforts were overtaken by the events on the ground. In Central Bosnia, Croats were pushed from Travnik, Bugojno, and Fojnica, while Gornji Vakuf and Novi Travnik were split in half. Croats in Central Bosnia were pushed into several small enclaves. The largest enclave was Novi Travnik-Vitez-Busovaca, which was later separated from the enclave of Kiseljak-Kresevo (and part of the Fojnica district). Small Croatian pockets remained around the cities of Zepce, Vares, several Croatian villages in the north (close to city of Doboj), the so-called Usora enclave, south of the city of Brcko, the so-called Ravne-Brcko enclave, and several villages close to Konjic in Herzegovina.

The Joint Action Plan reestablished the close cooperation between the United States and the major European allies, but it also brought about division inside the European Community. Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and other European countries resented the United Kingdom, France, and Spain in their abolishing the Maastricht principles of "Common Foreign and Security Policy." This new division would affect future diplomatic efforts to find a peace solution for the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

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64 Ibid., p.289.

C. A UNION OF THREE REPUBLICS

After the introduction of the "Containment" policy, mediators faced the logical question: "What kind of durable peace solution could be achieved with the containment policy?" Apparently the most powerful nations in the world rejected any kind of serious peace-making intervention in Bosnia and left the warring sides (now three of them) to find a military equilibrium among themselves, i.e. to fight until they were exhausted. In a situation when all three sides are fighting each other, a three-part separation seemed to be the logical solution. That did not necessarily mean the immediate carve-up of Bosnia between Serbia, Croatia, and the Bosnian Muslims, but in the long run, it could be expected.

Realizing that, the mediators tried to arrange a constitutional agreement, which would enable the creation of a Muslim Republic in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or in the future, a viable independent Muslim state. The starting point was that there would be no viable Muslim State without access to the sea to the south, and to the river Sava to the north. Access to the sea for the Muslims was possible only if Croats gave some territory on the coast and access to the river Sava was possible if the Serbs gave up the city of Brcko to the north. The Muslims had moral grounds in claiming the city of Brcko, which had been predominantly a Muslim city before the war,[65] but they never lived on the coast. The city of Neum was the only Bosnian territory on the coast, but it was

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[65] According to the census of 1991, there were 44 per cent of Muslims, 25 per cent of Croats, and 21 per cent of Serbs in Brcko before the war.

predominantly a Croatian city.[66] Besides that, the coast in the Neum-Klek Bay was not suitable for building a major port for the Bosnian Muslim Republic, and the only solution was to press the Croats to give up some territory on the coast. That meant redrawing borders between the former Yugoslav republics.

In the middle of June of 1993, Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg, who replaced Cyrus Vance, met several times with Milosevic, Tudjman, Izetbegovic, Karadzic, and Boban and these meetings established the basic principles for the next three peace plans for Bosnia: Union of three Republics, the EU Action Plan, and the Contact Group Plan. During the negotiations about the EU Action Plan, the United States also sponsored the establishment of a Muslim-Croat Federation. All these plans (including the Federation) dealt with the partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which would give the contiguous territory to the Serbian Republic in Bosnia. In some documents these plans for the three Republics were called the Owen-Stoltenberg Plans, but David Owen himself called it the Serb-Croat Plan.

At the end of June of 1993, the EC troika unwillingly accepted the fact that the Vance-Owen plan was dead. But, the old problem, i.e. the division of territory, had not disappeared with the new proposals. After a series of meetings, in the beginning of July, mediators got support in Belgrade and Zagreb for the Muslim republic that would have comprised 30 per cent of Bosnian

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[66] According to the census of 1991, there were only 5 per cent Muslims in the district of Neum, but in the city less than 1 per cent.

territory. Sarajevo would be put under United Nations protection and Mostar under the European Community administration. This was a serious offer and the mediators rushed to explain all the details to the European Community Foreign Ministers in Brussels. Izetbegovic stated that he could accept a cooperative solution for Bosnia, although it was difficult, for it effectively meant ethnic division. But, he was ready to negotiate in this direction.

As the talks progressed, the fighting on the ground intensified. The Serbian offensive at Mt. Igman almost stalled the negotiations. The West threatened bombing. The siege of Sarajevo continued, but nothing really happened. The Serbs withdrew and the United Nations soldiers took their positions, releasing troops needed for fighting in other areas.

During the summer, the plan was almost completed, but some European countries refused to back it. The German and Dutch Foreign Ministers claimed that the plan was not in conformity with the London Conference principles since it accepted that territory taken by force would remain in Serb hands. [67]

At the end of August, the Parliament of the Republic of Srpska voted to accept the plan, while the Muslim Parliament voted unanimously only to continue negotiations. Izetbegovic wanted all the territory in Eastern Bosnia that was predominantly Muslim before the war returned, and he wanted access to the sea in Neum. He accused the international community of pushing for the plan that

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[67] Ibid., p.213.

required the surrender of law to coercion and he could not accept such a solution. Bosnian Croats voted for the plan (see Figure 3).

A Union of Three Republics

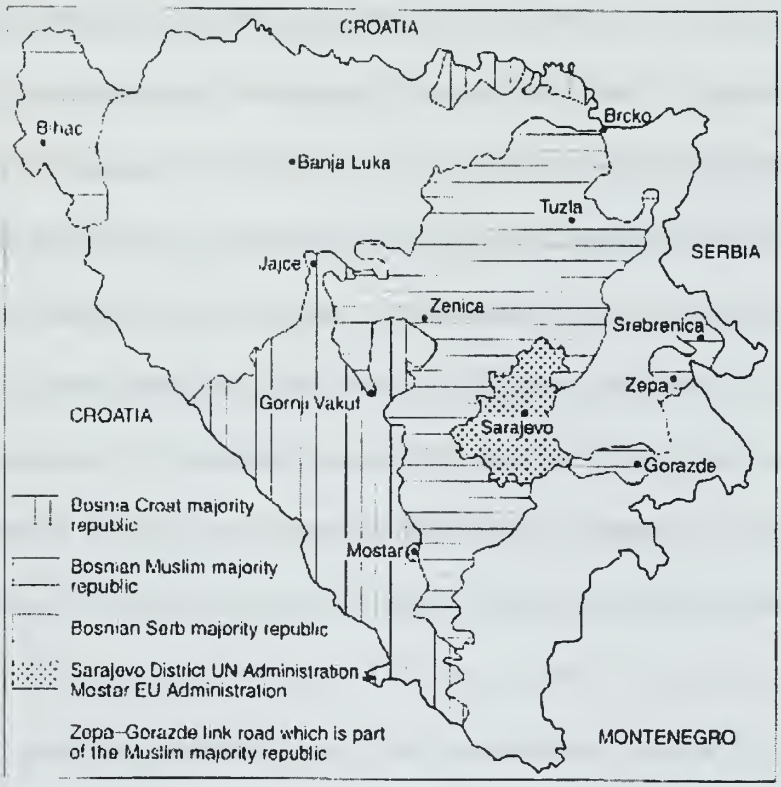

Figure 3

Source: David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1996), p.218.

All contested territories became terrible battlefields. The bloodiest war was in Central Bosnia where Muslim forces encircled Croatian enclaves. Using their numerical advantage, Muslim forces squeezed the Croats into their pockets and they were slowly gaining Bosnian Croat territory. Isolated Croatian pockets in Central Bosnia even established some cooperation with Serbs in order to

survive. But, at the same time Muslims did not attack Croatian enclaves on the north, because that territory was not contested. That territory would remain in the Muslim Republic. In the south in Herzegovina, Muslim forces tried to break through toward the sea but the Croats checked them at the village of Buna (south of Mostar). The Croats were exposed to international pressure to be more cooperative in giving up territory to the Muslim Republic. The pro-Muslim media accused the Republic of Croatia of sending 30,000[68] troops to Bosnia, which every military expert knew was nonsense. Such large numbers of troops would mean a strategic change[69] of the military equilibrium and it would give a significant advantage to Croatian forces on the battlefield. Actually, the Bosnian Croats suffered from the lack of men, and slowly lost ground. Mediators brokered a Muslim-Croat cease-fire on September 14, 1993. It did not last longer than few days.

At that stage of the Muslim-Croat war, the Muslims had no wish to stop fighting the Croats. They expected to gain Croatian territory by military means. The problem was the territory controlled by the Bosnian Serbs. The Muslim tactics toward the Serbs were different. At one time, Izetbegovic even offered Bosnian Serbs free secession if they conceded more territory, but the Serbs

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[68] Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death Of A Nation* (TV Books, Inc., distributed by Penguin USA, 1996), p.320.

[69] 30,000 additional troops would increase the Bosnian Croat forces to more than 50 per cent. In that case, they would reach 80,000 troops which was the size of the forces of the Bosnian Serbs.

refused.[70] The Croats refused the idea of a bilaterally negotiated secession, because it could establish an unpleasant precedent for the occupied Croatian territories.

The negotiations about a Union of three Bosnian Republics negatively influenced the internal relations among Bosnian Muslims. A group surrounding Prime Minister Silajdzic opposed the idea of creating three ethnic republics, and pleaded for a unitary state. He refused to sign the provisions of the agreement that would authorize a referendum on secession within two years. Later, his conflict with Izetbegovic escalated and he established his own political party.

On September 18, all key players in the Bosnian crisis met on British aircraft carrier "Invincible," and tried to negotiate a solution. But, the problem remained the same: The Serbs did not cede the land for the Muslims in Eastern Bosnia. The Muslims demanded four per cent more of the land, but the Serbs were not ready to cede it. Izetbegovic left the decision to the Muslim Parliament, which turned it down. Even Izetbegovic changed his mind. On September 22, he stated in the Herald Tribune that "he was not personally inclined toward the proposal", a position diametrically opposed to the one he had adopted before.[71] "The Muslims had clearly chosen to continue with the war, believing that

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[70] David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995), p.215.

[71] Ibid., p.220.

sanctions would soften up the Serbs and, on the advice of their military commanders, that they could defeat the Croats in Central Bosnia ."[72]

On October 3, eighteen Americans were killed in Somalia. This incident would have a strong influence on the United States political attitudes toward the United Nations and the Bosnian crisis.

D. THE EU ACTION PLAN

The fears of a humanitarian crisis that could happen during the next winter of 1993/94 shifted the public mood in the West toward the peace agreement that was offered on the "Invincible." Even Germany and the Netherlands were ready to back the Bosnian Union of Three Republics. The realities of war prevailed and it was clear that many of the principles of international justice would have to be put aside.

In late October of 1993, the United States again criticized the United Kingdom and France for their refusal to lift the arm embargo for Bosnia. The short-lived unity of the allies achieved by the Joint Action Plan in May of 1993 vanished. In early November of 1993, the European Union (the former European Community) took a more decisive approach to the Bosnian crisis. On November 7, the French and German Foreign Ministers, Alain Juppé and Klaus Kinkel, issued a letter to the President of the Foreign Affairs Council, in which they demanded 3 per cent more land for a Muslim Republic, so that the republic

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[72] Ibid., p.221.

could cover at least one third of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In return they proposed the relief of sanctions to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, i.e. Serbia and Montenegro. This was bargaining like at a farmers' market. The Muslims had demanded four per cent, but the European Union was to support 3.33 per cent. Mediators estimated that Europe was fed up with Bosnia, and the parties should be pushed toward a settlement. Europe was supporting the Muslims' claim for more land, but further warring could alienate the European Union. The United States was not happy with the Franco-German proposal for lifting the sanctions against Serbia. They were also not pleased with the peace agreement in Bosnia. They were not ready to press the Muslims to accept such an agreement.

The Muslim-Croat war reached its climax. The Muslim Army (ABIH) conquered the Croatian enclave created around the predominantly Croatian town of Vares. The Croats were pushed to a small territory around the village of Dastansko, which was squeezed between the Muslims and the Serbs. The relations between the Muslims and the Croats were so bad that, unlike the Serbs and Muslims during the negotiations in Geneva, the Croats and Muslims did not want to negotiate directly. In the latter part of 1993, the Government in Sarajevo was a Muslim puppet. Izetbegovic convinced the world that he had the right to legitimately speak for all the Bosnian people. As David Owen said: "The collective Presidency as a democratic body was by the autumn of 1993 no longer

a reality. The real choices were made elsewhere. We were in effect dealing with a Muslim government for a predominantly Muslim people."[73]

The other problem was in intra-Muslim relations. In reality no one was sure that the Muslims were ready to make an agreement with 3-4 per cent more land. Mediators recognized that lack of cohesion in the Muslim leadership and that damaged or at least slowed the negotiation process several times.

On November 29, the parties were invited to a new round of negotiations. The European Union expected the Serbian side to make new concessions, the Croats to assure the access to the sea, and the Muslims to confirm satisfaction with four per cent more land. But, the Muslims changed over time. They could be satisfied with four per cent more territory, but Izetbegovic demanded the return of conquered territories in the East and Muslim sovereignty over Neum. The Croats were ready to offer the village of Tasovcici near Capljina on the Neretva River as an outlet to the sea, but the Muslims refused it and demanded sovereignty over Neum again (see Figure 4).

Apparently, the Muslims felt no pressure and wanted to continue fighting the Bosnian Croats, pursuing more concessions. The President of Croatia offered territorial compensation in which the Muslims could get access to the sea in southern Croatia. But, the Muslims refused that offer, which was a negative sign suggesting they wanted to continue fighting. There was some progress on the map, and Muslim could get 31.3 per cent of the land at the moment.

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[73] Ibid., p.50.

The European Union pressed the mediators to find a solution with 33.3 per cent of the land and access to the sea for the Muslims. The lure should have been NATO's air coverage in the implementation of the agreement. But the Muslims wanted NATO troops on the ground, and that was something that the European Union could not offer without the United States.

EU Action Plan

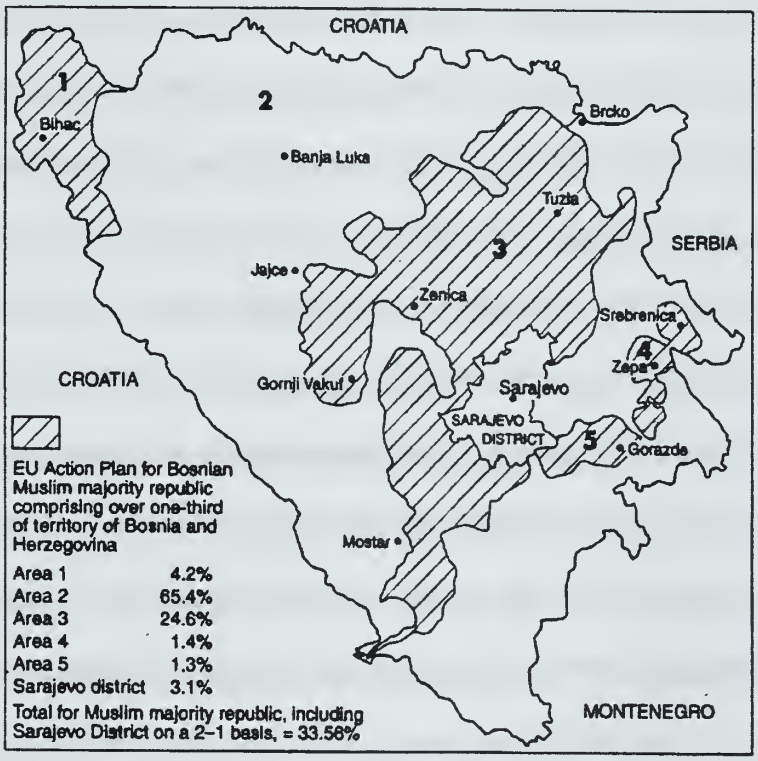

Figure 4

Source: David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995), p.237.

On December 20, the Croatian government sent a letter to the European Union ambassadors in Croatia that it would never support any agreement which

did not ensure at least 17.5 per cent[74] of the land for Bosnian Croats and under no circumstances could Vitez and Busovaca be given up. On the secession issue, the Croatian government considered that it had to be tri-lateral agreement.

The next day, Izetbegovic and Tudjman met in Geneva prior to a long Serb-Croat meeting. Serbs and Croats agreed to put aside their own territorial disputes and find 33.3% of land for the Muslims. That was the moment when the ratio 49 - 51 was established. In all later negotiation, this ratio was kept; 49 per cent of Bosnia for the Serbs and the rest for the Muslims and Croats. In return, they refused the United Nations and European Union administration in Sarajevo and Mostar, respectively. The access to the Sava River in Brcko was still unresolved because the Bosnian Serbs withdrew their concession on this issue. The other problems were also over the size of the corridors in Eastern Bosnia and the sovereignty over Neum. The Muslims were even ready to split Sarajevo and Mostar if they were satisfied with the other territories. As far as access to the sea was concerned, the European Union preferred the "Invincible" issue, but the United States delegate, Charles Redman warned that Muslim feelings toward Neum should not be underestimated. Although the parties made significant progress, the final solution was not achieved.

David Owen stated that Muslims should have settled. They could have gotten a viable Muslim Republic and in the future an independent Muslim state. It would be the most stable solution if accepted by all parties. Since the Republic

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[74] That was the percentage of Bosnian Croats in overall population of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

of Croatia and Bosnia, Croats were under strong international pressure and with the Serbs already under sanctions, the Muslims hoped they could achieve more.

On January 8, the Germans hosted a Muslim-Croat meeting. The main issue was Neum. The Muslims were ready to recognize Croatian sovereignty over the road that passed through Neum if they could have the town. Administration of the European Union in Neum was also one of the solutions offered during the negotiations which was not implemented. Finally, the Croats offered the Muslims the Treaty of Cooperation, which was drawn on the joint Muslim-Croat declaration of September 14, 1993 (cessation of hostilities), but the Muslims refused. They asked to resolve the details in the dispute before signing such a treaty. The Muslims did not want to enter into some definite commitments and they kept all options open. They were focused on conquering territory in Central Bosnia from the Bosnian Croats, while putting the Serbs aside for the moment. There was no significant progress at that meeting, but it opened new possibilities for resolving the Muslim-Croat war - creation of one joint entity. Later, the United States delegate to the International Conference for the Former Yugoslavia, exploited this idea and successfully brokered the establishment of a Muslim-Croat Federation. But, at that moment the Muslims were still too confident and showed little or no will to cooperate. But, in early 1994, the Croats made a tactical move.

On January 18, 1994, there was no special progress on the issues connected with Bosnia-Herzegovina, but Tudjman and Milosevic agreed to

establish permanent offices of the Croatian and Serbian governments in Belgrade and Zagreb, respectively. Now the Muslims faced a possible Serbo-Croat alliance. There were already some signs of cooperation between Bosnian Croats in the surrounded Croatian pockets and Bosnian Serbs,[75] but if it was formalized the Muslims could be squeezed into living in the Tuzla and Zenica districts. The United States recognized the possible consequences for the Muslims immediately and in early 1994 started pressing Muslims and Croats to come to terms. Many observers called the reestablished Muslim-Croat alliance a "marriage of convenience," but it would be more appropriate to call it a "shotgun wedding."

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[75] Strange alliances appeared on the field without knowledge of the central leaderships all the time. One such case of Muslim-Serb cooperation in the Mostar area was described in Owen's *Balkan Odyssey* on page 350.

VI. "A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE" 1994-1997

A. A FREE WILL FEDERATION OR "A SHOTGUN WEDDING?"

After the Muslim-Croat war, the humanitarian situation deteriorated quickly not only in Sarajevo, but also in Bosnia as a whole. No one maintained the "Diamond Route" or "Salvation Road" that was passing through the mountain ranges of Vran and Cvrsnica and further in Central Bosnia and soon they became useless. Besides that, both sides established numerous checkpoints, which additionally slowed the delivery of goods. Ethnic hatred escalated so much so, that on many occasions civilians tried to prevent the delivery of food to the other side, usually by blocking and looting the humanitarian convoys meant for their enemies. Apparently, the real winners in this war were the Serbs.

The public and Congress's[76] pressure on the Clinton administration grew again in the latter part of 1993 and early 1994. The American representative at the International Conference for Former Yugoslavia, Charles Redman, got new instructions[77] on how to deal with the Bosnian crisis. The United States was horrified with the possibility of a humanitarian and military catastrophe that could hit the Bosnian Muslims, especially in the light of the news about a growing Serb-

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[76] In January, Congress voted for lifting the arms embargo for Bosnian Muslims. Ibid., p.253.

[77] Ibid., p.251.

Croat cooperation.[78] The delivery of weapons to the Bosnian Muslims was significantly reduced after the Muslim-Croat war broke out. The "containment" policy that prolonged the war, gave the Muslims the chance to achieve some territorial gains by military means, but could eventually fail. Rumors about weapons deliveries from Iran only increased the pressure on the administration. Therefore, the administration decided to press the Croats and the Muslims to renew their alliance.

The idea of a joint Muslim-Croat entity was rather old, and it appeared for the first time in September 1993 when both sides signed the peace agreement and committed themselves to renew cooperation. But, at the same time the European Community and the United Nations' mediators were pursuing the idea of a union of three independent Bosnian republics, and logically the sides did not show too much interest in negotiating a joint entity with Redman and a separate entity with Owen and Stoltenberg at the same time. From September 1993, the Americans were pushing the sides to come to an agreement but made a little progress, until it became obvious in late December that even the EU "Action Plan" would fail. The United States applied additional pressure on the leadership of the Republic of Croatia by exposing the Croats to international criticism, because of their support to the Bosnian Croats. The Security Council of the

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[78] Officially both sides were still at war and cooperation was on the local level only, where the Croats living in pockets (squeezed between the Muslims and the Serbs) paid for safe passage via the Serbian territory, in food or fuel. One Bosnian Franciscan on trial in The Hag obtained a good account on these issues. <http://www.hina.hr/hina/arhiva/Nov.03.1998/cc.hb033460.4ix.html> [Access November 11, 1998]

United Nations was drafting a Resolution, which would condemn "the Croatian military intervention in Bosnia."

In December of 1993 the leader of the Bosnian Croats, Mate Boban, was ousted, and on January 7, 1994 in Bonn, the Croats offered the Muslims the fully drafted treaty on Cooperation. But, the Muslims refused to accept this treaty, because they felt encouraged by Iranian weapons deliveries and showed no desire to stop fighting. When the Croats turned toward the Serbs and signed an agreement on establishing diplomatic offices on January 17, 1994, the United States immediately applied additional pressure via the United Nations Security Council. On February 3, the United Nations Security Council passed the Presidential Statement, which demanded "that the Republic of Croatia withdraw all elements of the Croatian Army, along with military equipment and fully respect the territorial integrity of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina." It also expressed the UN's "readiness to consider other serious measures if the Republic of Croatia failed to put an immediate end to all forms of interference in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina." In all probability, because the Croats showed their desire to cooperate in Bonn, the United States did not pass the Resolution, which was a stronger form of diplomatic communication, but passed the Presidential Statement. The Presidential Statement was more than a clear warning that the Croats had to make additional efforts and offer the Muslims more concessions if the agreement on cooperation was to be signed.

After the market square bombing in Sarajevo on February 5, 1994 and the successful NATO ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs, the Americans were even more determined to halt the Muslim-Croat war. On February 16, the American Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia, Peter Galbraith, proposed to the Croatian President the idea of a Federation between the Muslim and Croat entities. Above all, for the protection of the Bosnian Croats, the Muslim-Croat Federation was to establish a confederation with the Republic of Croatia. The idea was accepted and after a small amount of pressure on the Muslim side,[79] the Americans summoned the Bosnian and the Croatian Foreign Ministers to Washington to negotiate the agreement on the Muslim-Croat Federation. In less than two weeks, Redman, Galbraith and the American Ambassador to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Victor Jakovich, brokered the Agreement of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Washington Agreement on the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was signed on March 2, 1994. The final deal on the constitutional principle for Federation was reached in Vienna on March 13, 1994. On March 18, Presidents Tudjman, Izetbegovic, the new Bosnian Croat leader, Kresimir Zubak, and Prime Minister Silajdzic signed a draft of the constitution of the Muslim-Croat Federation, and Presidents Tudjman and Izetbegovic signed a

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[79] Some preliminary United Nations reports claimed that the mortar shell might have been launched from the Muslim army side, and at that moment Muslim politicians became much more cooperative. David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995), pp. 260-261.

letter of intent on the Confederation between the Republic of Croatia and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

There were some changes in the first draft of the agreement. The Federation would consist of several Muslim (now called Bosniac[80]) and Croat cantons, not incorporated in the Muslim and Croat Republics. The cantons would not have national, but geographical names. In Central Bosnia and the Neretva River Valley, there would be mixed Bosniac-Croat cantons. These two cantons would have a special ruling government with strict national parity. Other cantons would be predominantly Bosniac or Croat, but the districts in those cantons would have the right to lead cultural and educational policies depending on the wishes of the people that lived in those districts. The parties renewed their military alliance and expressed their intention to fight until all of the predominantly Bosniac and Croat territories in Bosnia and Herzegovina were liberated.

Apparently, this was the weakest point in this treaty. After two years of "ethnic cleansing" it was not clear what the predominantly Bosniac and Croat territories were. If the Bosniacs and Croats had been able to liberate their ethnic territory, they would have done it one year earlier. On the other hand, the international community did not express their intent to roll back the Serbian territorial conquest. Soon, the Federal partners realized that the international

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[80] The word Bosniacs refers to Bosnian Muslims only. This new/old name was probably chosen to stress their right to Bosnia and to avoid confusion with "Muslim" in the religious and national

community would not even take into consideration their demands for more than 51 per cent of the territory. But, even with the disputes resolved between the Bosniacs and the Croats, and the 51 per cent of territory that had been allocated to them before, the international community still was not able to make a peace agreement for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Apparently, there were some other disputable points in the Bosnian conflict other than territory still waiting to be resolved.

B. THE CONTACT GROUP AND ITS PEACE PLAN

The Bosniac-Croat Federation certainly made negotiation on the peace plan for Bosnia easier, because it was not necessary to determine a border between Bosniacs and Croats, only between the Serbian entity and the Federation. The Serbs refused the American offer to participate in the Federation, and their Parliament voted for independence of their Republic of Srpska on March 22, leaving no doubt what their intentions were. Apparently, having the Bosniac-Croat Federation established, the international community had to make a new peace plan for Bosnia.

Four months of cease-fire expired in April, and the situation deteriorated again. The Serbs attacked the United Nations safe area in Gorazde. They realized that a peace solution could soon be found, and they wanted to have "clean" and contiguous territorial lines in Eastern Bosnia. On the other hand, the

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sense. The word Bosnians refers to all three Bosnian nationalities (Bosniacs, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats).

Serbs thought that this "demonstration of power" would soften the Bosniacs and they would be more cooperative. But they did not count on such a decisive reaction from the international community. On April 16, the NATO planes bombed Serbian positions, and the situation was calmed down.

Successful Bosniac-Croat negotiations on the Federation led by American diplomats proved that the United Nations' and the European Union's cooperation in the Yugoslav crisis was not enough. Apparently, the United States and if possible Russia, should have been involved in the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia from the beginning. But, that was not an attractive solution for the Americans. They were not ready to deal with all twelve European nations and they preferred a much closer circle. Any working group would have to contain British and French representatives, which could coordinate activities on the ground and in the United Nations Security Council. Germany was important as a link toward the Croats, Russia toward the Serbs. The idea was to establish a Contact Group mechanism similar to that which was used in 1977 over Namibia. The representatives of the major European powers, the United States and Russia, as well as Owen and Stoltenberg met for the first time in London on April 26, 1994. Later, they traveled from capitol to capitol of the countries that were members of the Contact Group.

During May of 1994, the Contact Group established its policy toward the Bosnian crisis. They accepted the division on the 51-49 per cent basis, and as a reward for the Serbs phasing out, lifting of the United Nations sanctions. The

Contact Group developed its own map which was to be presented to all sides. Even the Russians did not object too much. The United States' representative turned down any possibility of imposing the Contact Group solution against the wishes of the parties. The situation was pretty much the same as before. But, from an outside perspective, this group bore much more credibility than the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. On May 25, the Contact Group started meeting representatives of the Bosnian parties, presenting them its proposals (see Figure 4).

The Contact Group lacked the determination to press the Bosnian parties to accept the plan. Rhetoric remained almost the same as in the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. The Group did not agree on the ideas of applying selective force on those that did not comply with their proposals. Their plan was offered "a la carte" for almost one year. The problem for the Group was that it continued to work on the principle of the least common denominator, and it could not bring fresh new ideas to the table. That was why the Group did not plan any additional measures against those parties who did not comply with the plan or rewards for those who accepted the plan. More or less everything stayed the same as in the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia.

At first the Bosnian Serbs rejected the map accusing the Contact Group of constructing the map intentionally in a way that the Serbs had to reject it. Later, under strong pressure from Russia and Milosevic, they accepted the map, but refused the constitutional principles. They accepted the plan as a basis for

further negotiations. Regarding sanctions, their position was – that the sanctions had to be lifted first and then they would offer peace. During August, the Bosnian Serbs even organized a referendum on that issue, but the result was expected - rejection.

Contact Group Plan

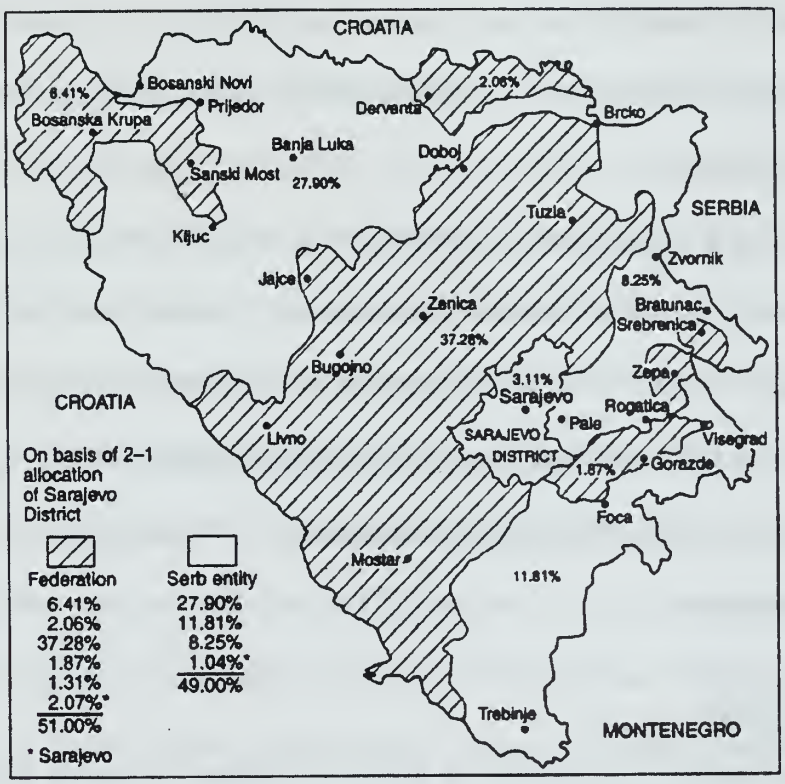

Figure 5

Source: David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995), pp.281

In spite of all the humiliation the Group underwent from the Bosnian Serbs, the Contact Group did not respond. In effect, it only deepened the differences between Russians and Americans. Americans thought it was time

for "lift and strike" while the Russians opposed that. Apparently, it was up to the parties on the ground to find the final military and political equilibrium that would create the necessary conditions for a peace plan.

The biggest achievement of this Contact Group plan was the final break between Milosevic and the leadership of the Bosnian Serbs. Milosevic was tired of the sanctions, and considered the plan acceptable. He sealed the borders between Serbia-Montenegro and the Bosnian Serbs, leaving no doubt of his position on this issue.

The Contact Group plan did not have any significant effect on the Bosniac-Croat relations. The Federal partners were technically allies, but their relations were still rather "cold." The war wounds were still fresh and there was little or no progress in the implementation of the Washington Agreement. Regarding the implementation of the Washington Agreement, interestingly, the soldiers were ahead of politicians.

C. LIBERATION

In the autumn and winter of 1994, the military situation around Bihac in Western Bosnia became rather complicated. The Bosnian Serb Army and the Croatian Serb Army tried to cut the enclave into halves and to erase that last large Muslim enclave in the contiguous Serbian territory from Croatia to Serbia. The survival of this enclave was of strategic importance not only to Bosnia, but also to Croatia. Its position could be compared with the giant stronghold gained by the airborne operation deep in Serb-held territory. The enclave was already

exhausted with the constant warfare during the last three years and survived only because of the strong determination of its people in Bihac and the risky airlift from Croatia. Relations between HVO and ABIH were generally good in that area, because these relations were not a contested territory between Bosniacs and Croats. Relations between the two militaries were somewhat soured after the Commander of Croatian Forces in that area, General Santic, was kidnapped and executed by the Bosniacs Military Police. The Croatian Forces were much weaker and they did not open a second front. After all, both sides were under constant attack from the Serbian positions around Bihac.

After the deterioration of the situation in the Bihac area, the late Croatian Minister of Defense, Gojko Susak, publicly announced a decision to intervene in the case of the fall of Bihac, "Bihac was of strategic importance for Republic of Croatia and there was no way to prevent us." Croatia's position was not definitive at that moment, because Croatia was in the middle of discussions about future defense cooperation with the United States. Susak and the Chief of the General Staff of the Croatian Army, General Bobetko, visited the United States on different occasions during the autumn of 1994, and they were "persuaded" not to open a new battlefield in Croatia while Bosnia was still boiling. In return the United States promised to act through the United Nations and NATO.

The United States pressed Britain and France to accept the NATO air strikes against Bosnian and Croatian Serbs, because they were violating the

United Nations Resolution by attacking the Safe Area of Bihac. Indeed, NATO attacked the airport of Udbina in the Serb-held part of Croatia, because of the violation of the no-fly zone over Bosnia. On the second occasion NATO attacked the position of Serbian SAM-2 and SAM-6 air defense. But British and French commanders of the United Nations troops in Bosnia, General Michel Rose and General Bernard de Lapresle, rapidly called off the air strikes infuriating Americans, Bosniacs, and Croats.

Having the American action fail, Croatia got tacit approval to act in order to protect its own interests. The decision was made to act south of Bihac, in the mountain range of Dinara on the Croatian-Bosnian border, drawing significant Serbian forces from Bihac to the south. Deeper in Bosnian territory, HVO – the Bosnian Croat Army and ABIH – the Bosniac Armed Forces, acted together for the first time in the area of Kupres. For the sake of truth, it must be said that this was not a joint operation, but that Bosniacs and Croats just coordinated their efforts to a certain extent. As one HVO commander said, "At least we shoot in the same direction...." It was the beginning of a renewed alliance, and the beginning of an operation for the liberation of Croatia and a big chunk of Bosnian territory in the West of the country.

In the beginning of 1995, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman announced his intention to cancel the mandate of the United Nations troops on Croatian territory, if there was no progress on reintegration of that territory by peaceful means. Trying to avoid further complications, the international community

pressed Croatia not to start a new war.[81] The Croatian problem was that the United Nations' troops were supposed to secure the return of Croatian refuges to occupied territory, but during the three years of United Nations presence in Croatia not a single refugee returned to his home. With the help of the EU mediator in 1994, the Republic of Croatia and the Serbian rebels started talks about economic cooperation but there was no significant progress. Under International pressure, the Serbs accepted the opening of a major highway between Zagreb and Eastern Croatia, but on several occasions they used that highway for blackmail purposes by opening and closing it at will. Croatian patience did not last long.

The situation in Bosnia was deteriorating too. On May 1, 1995, the official "New Year," the four-month cessation of hostilities in Bosnia ended too. Sarajevo was under mortar fire again. The Serbs were violating the United Nations Safe Area again and Bosniacs called for NATO air strikes. The Serbs even seized the heavy weapons from the United Nations secured stockpiles. After a bitter quarrel between America and the Secretary General of the United Nations, Buthros-Buthros Ghali, NATO attacked the Serbian positions around Sarajevo on May 24, and 26. The Serbs responded by taking United Nations' personnel as hostages. There was confusion among the chief powers involved

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[81] On February 4, 1995 Croatian and American Defense Ministers, Susak and Perry, and CJCS General Shalikasvili met in Munich. "Perry told Susak that we [the United States] continue to feel that his government was making a mistake... General Shali warned him that the JCS assessment of the balances of forces was far more pessimistic than Zagreb's" Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1998), p.62.

in this crisis. Part of the British Prime Minister's cabinet wanted to pull their forces, while the French wanted to reinforce, and the Americans were looking for other options. The United States Government realized that it had to take more decisive steps to end the Bosnian war.

Simultaneously, with the creation of Rapid Reaction Forces for reinforcement of UNPROFOR, NATO developed a secret operational plan "40-104" for withdrawal of the United Nations' troops from Bosnia. The United States could not keep an intermediate position any longer, and they had to engage their troops either in support of the withdrawal the United Nations troops or in the implementation (imposition) of peace in Bosnia. The decision in favor of the latter solution was probably made under pressure from Congress. Without a decision, President Clinton's administration would enter the campaign of 1996 with empty hands in the area of foreign policy. Republican candidate Bob Dole had already called for a much more radical solution. The humanitarian catastrophe in Zepa and Srebrenica in the middle of July played into his hands, and the administration had to act more decisively. On July 21, Defense Ministers of countries assisting with troops decided to defend Gorazde with all available means. The War escalated into every corner of Bosnia.

On July 22, Presidents Tudjman and Izetbegovic met in Split, Croatia and signed a formal military alliance between the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Croats just continued their action started in the winter of 1994 and entered the Serb-held "Krajina" from the rear. The operation started on August

4, 1995. The Serbian mini-state of "Krajina" collapsed in less than four days. The siege of Bihac was broken and an even larger, predominantly Serbian region in Western Bosnia was left undefended and in danger. The balance of power in the region was completely changed.

In late August of 1995, the Serbs bombed Sarajevo again. Heavy civilian casualties outraged the whole world and NATO responded by bombing Serbian positions. The Serbs were furious because of NATO attacks and their territorial losses as well. During September and October of 1995, the Croatian Forces (HV and HVO) together with the Bosniac forces on the flanks, pushed the Serbs toward their stronghold city of Banja Luka. A large piece of Bosnian territory on the West was under Croat-Bosniac control. In the meantime, the American Government launched new a diplomatic initiative, drawn on a "more realistic" approach and brokered a truce at the end of October of 1995. Everything was ready for Dayton.

D. DAYTON AGREEMENT

At the beginning of August of 1995, the United States Government reviewed[82] its policy toward Bosnia and created its own peace plan for the final settlement in Bosnia. The plan consisted of seven points: (1) a comprehensive peace settlement; (2) a three-way recognition among Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro; (3) the lifting of sanctions against Serbia-Montenegro if a

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[82] Ibid., pp.73-74.

settlement was reached and an American-backed program to equip and train the Federation forces; (4) reintegration of Eastern Slavonia into Croatia; (5) to stop offensive operations; (6) a reaffirmation of the Contact Group Plan; and (7) a regional economic recovery. The senior member of President Clinton's advisers visited Europe and Russia seeking support for the plan, while the Chief of the Department for European and Canadian Affairs, Richard Holbrooke, was to start all-out negotiations.

The plan was welcomed in Europe and in Russia with some small objections on American military support to the Bosniac-Croat Federation. It should not surprise anyone, because the United States basically committed itself to engage in the implementation of the peace plan, which elated the Europeans, and promised to lift sanctions imposed on Serbia-Montenegro, which satisfied the Russians.

Holbrooke was shuttling between capitols in the former Yugoslavian republics trying to persuade Presidents Tudjman, Milosevic, and Izetbegovic to accept the American plan as a basis for the overall settlement between the former Yugoslav republics. He found no opposition in Zagreb, which after the collapse of "Krajina" was in the best position for negotiations. The situation among the Bosniacs and the Serbs was different - they were divided as usual.

Izetbegovic wanted to negotiate for a single country but he was ready to accept the importance of a Serbian autonomy. Prime Minister Silajdzic also

wanted to negotiate a single multi-ethnic country[83] but with a much stronger central government. This division would cause a lot of problems and the West would be frustrated during the negotiations, because it would not be clear what the Bosniac's position was.

After their initial rejection, the Bosnian Serbs were exposed to strong military and diplomatic pressure, and their Parliament decided to put their destiny in Milosevic's hands. They gave him Power of Attorney to represent their interests. It effectively meant that they accepted the negotiations, because Milosevic had already accepted the Contact Group Plan almost one year earlier.

Holbrooke never tried to examine the position of the Bosnian Croats. In his book, he did not explain who would defend the interests of the Bosnian Croats, the Republic of Croatia or the Bosniacs. Entering the Federation with Bosnians, Bosnian Croats lost their political influence and that created a lot of frustration among them.

At the end of August of 1995, Holbrooke got the consent of all parties to start negotiations. He still had to settle some staff details and to brief the Europeans and some important Islamic countries. With the help of NATO air strikes and several military defeats that the Serbs suffered in Western Bosnia, Holbrooke refined the most important provisions of the future peace agreement with Milosevic. The parties met first in Geneva on September 7, 1995 to confirm

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[83] Explaining Silajdzic's position on that issue Holbrooke said, "...although he [Silajdzic] referred to the Croats with such animosity that I did not see how he could ever cooperate with them" Ibid., p.97.

their readiness to negotiate on the American principles, and later in New York on September 26, the provision on a central government was agreed upon. In the beginning of October all sides signed the cease-fire and the situation was ripe for serious negotiations.

Negotiations began in Dayton almost one month later. There were many issues on the table to negotiate: Eastern Slavonia, the Bosniac-Croat Federation, a constitutional framework, elections, a three-person presidency, a Bosnian Central Assembly, freedom of movement and the right of refugees to return to their homes, compliance with the International War Crimes Tribunal, and an International Police Force. Above all, the most difficult task to negotiate was determining the internal borders between the Serbs and Bosniac-Croat Federation.

The negotiations over the Federation issue were handed over to German diplomat Michael Steiner, who continued working with Bosniac and Croat representatives in a working group. Milosevic and Tudjman negotiated directly over Eastern Slavonia, but Milosevic insisted that the final agreement had to be made on the field. During the next few days the Chief of President Tudjman's office negotiated the so-called Erdut Agreement on the reintegration of Eastern Slavonia into the Republic of Croatia. Milosevic was promised the phasing out and lifting of sanctions after the initiation of an agreement. Negotiations continued over the next twenty days but in several working groups. Most of the problems were resolved in the first fifteen days, but when negotiators turned to

the maps it became clear just how large a gap still existed between all sides. The crucial points were: Sarajevo, the Brcko and Posavina Corridor, Gorazde, the Posavina pocket, Srebrenica and Zepa, and Bosanski Novi. There were many other disputed areas but those were secondary.

The Dayton Agreement Map

Figure 6

Source: "Operation Joint Endeavor-Maps," <http://www.nato.int/maps/ifor/m960819g.gif> [Access December 1, 1998].

During the last week of negotiations, there was significant progress achieved on the majority of issues and it was necessary to just close the deal on the maps. Bosnia-Herzegovina would be a single country with two entities, the

Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bosniac-Croat). There would be a central government with limited authority and regional governments in the Federation and the Serbian Republic. Both entities would keep their own military forces, while the Federation Forces would consist of two components HVO and ABIH and their forces could be merged above the brigade level.

On November 20, during one negotiation-marathon, Silajdzic and Milosevic cut the final deal. They negotiated only with Holbrooke present in the room. Milosevic ceded to the Bosniacs control over the whole of Sarajevo, and in return, to preserve the "sacred ratio" 51-49, Silajdzic ceded to the Serbs the land that the Croatian troops conquered during their last offensive[84] in September of 1995. The Croats felt as though they had been stabbed in the back by the Bosniacs and refused the agreement. Then Holbrooke proposed a redistribution of the "concessions" to the Serbs, to both the Bosniac and the Croat sides, but surprisingly Izetbegovic refused it. It was time use the heavy artillery.

President Clinton was supposed call Izetbegovic and Tudjman to apply pressure to both sides, the Croats and the Bosniacs, to redistribute the "concessions" among themselves, but National Security Adviser Anthony Lake opposed the call to Izetbegovic. During the conversation with President Clinton, President Tudjman promised that the Croats would give up 3/4 of the land

needed to close the deal. It was up to Izetbegovic to offer the rest, but he refused. Only one per cent of Bosnian land stood between peace and war, but Izetbegovic was firm. Most importantly, this was not land under Bosniac control. Christopher and Holbrooke pressed Izetbegovic, but in return he was asking for the city of Brcko which was not even an issue before this.

His indecisiveness was threatening to destroy one more agreement. Finally, President Tudjman convinced Milosevic to accept the independent arbitration on the Brcko issue within one year and Izetbegovic accepted it. The parties unofficially signed (initialed) the Dayton Peace Agreement[85] of November 21, 1995 (see Figure 6). The tough and painful process of its implementation on the ground has yet to be done.

E. IMPLEMENTATION

The division of labor in the implementation process was done during the London Peace Implementation Conference[86] held on December 8-9, 1995. The responsibility for the implementation of the military portion of the Agreement was transferred to NATO and partly to OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), while the civilian part of the implementation was transferred to the EU and partly to OSCE. The Agreement was officially signed

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[84] For more details see and dramatic moments on November 20 see Ibid. pp. 299-300.

[85] <http://www.ohr.int/gfa/gfa-home.htm> [Access November 15, 1998].

[86] <http://www.ohr.int/docu/d951208a.htm> [Access November 15, 1998].

in Paris on December 15, 1995 and its implementation started on December 20, 1995.

A special representative of the United States government carried out the part of the Agreement that referred to the United States support of the Army of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Other countries (mostly Islamic) that wanted to take part in this program donated money and weapons for the Federation Forces. The Europeans did not want to be involved in this part of the agreement, and they committed themselves to helping the economic reconstruction of the Bosnian economy instead.

The implementation of the military portion of the Dayton Agreement on the field went well,[87] but the negotiations on Sub-Regional Arms Control in Vienna (the reduction of military potentials) led by the permanent representative of the OSCE Chairman[88] lasted almost six months. The negotiations got stuck because the Bosniac side, as the weakest side in the subregion insisted on the least possible weapons quotas which infuriated the Serbs who still had the largest stock-piles of weapons from the former Yugoslav Army. The agreement of Sub-Regional Arms Control was signed in Florence on June 16, 1996 (after the due date) and its implementation was more or less successful.

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[87] The code-name of that largest NATO operation in its history was Joint Endeavor. For more details see <http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/sfor.htm> [Access November 15, 1998].

[88] Norwegian General Kai Eide almost blew up negotiations in the very beginning by giving the Croatian and Bosnian notification of weapons to the Serbs who were late in preparing their data.

Most of the problems during the beginning of implementation were in the political area of the Agreement on both levels (entity and state). From the beginning of implementation it was obvious that the present authorities in the Republic of Srpska did not support the agreement, and they would try to delay its implementation. In the end, they did not negotiate this agreement, and accepted it only under the strong pressure of Milosevic.

The biggest concern of the international community was the situation in the Bosniac-Croat Federation. The shaky confidence between the Federal partners almost disappeared in Dayton after Silajdzic had exchanged "the Croatian territory" with the Serbs. There were numerous incidents on the field between the Bosniacs and Croats. During the first year of implementation, there was no significant progress in returning refugees to their homes.[89] The complicated situation in Mostar got worse after the unauthorized changes of Protocol on Mostar signed in Dayton by the European Union administrator Hans Koschnik.

There were no significant problems on the military level of implementation of the Agreement in the Bosniac-Croat Federation in the field, but the problems arose with the implementation of the American-led program, "Train and Equip." The Croatian side objected to the commencement of implementation of the program before all political relations between the Federation and State were

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[89] The biggest problems were in Central Bosnia (Bugojno, Travnik, Jajce, etc.) and Herzegovina (Mostar, Stolac) where the strongest fighting was between Bosniacs and Croats during the war of

clarified. The American military instructors began combat training of the Federal troops even before the chain of command was defined and other political-military problems were resolved.[90] The Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina had federal troops before the Federal Ministry of Defense did, and before it became clear who was Commander-in-Chief of its troops (Bosnian civil-military relations were and still are extremely complicated).

There were significant problems during the definition of the Federal Law on Defense. The Bosniac side wanted to achieve maximum integration (unification) of forces in all areas that were not defined by the Agreement, while the Croatian side preferred maximum independence. There were also problems during the definition of the structure of the Federal forces, as well as the location of the training center, the distribution of donated weapons, and so forth. In spite of the many ill-defined relations between the two components of Federal forces, the United States government pushed the sides to carry out the "Train and Equip" program, because the situation in Bosnia was not stable and they wanted to create Federal forces that could oppose a possible Serbian attack.

Relations on the political level were even worse. It was necessary to define the Federal Constitution and other important laws, but the pattern of relations between the Federal partners was the same. For everything that was

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1993/94. Bosniacs and Croats were allies, and if they could not live together, the returning of refugees in the Republic of Srpska would be even harder.

[90] The training of Federal troops started before national security strategy and national military strategies were brought. It was one of the typical Bosnian problems, the troops were created, but their enemy was not defined.

not defined by the Dayton Agreement, both of the Federal partners had different opinions and in general the Bosniac side wanted centralization as much as possible, while the Croats wanted maximum decentralization and autonomy. The political differences that had existed before the Washington Agreement remained the same and apparently the partners did not believe each other. The Federal Parliament was a big market where parties very often blocked each other's laws because one or the other delayed to implement some other agreements. Such behavior caused a lot of frustration on the side of the international community. The debates in Parliament were so severe that it was almost impossible to pass any of thousands of laws necessary. In spite of arbitrations accepted by both sides, there was a little or no progress achieved.

A similar situation existed on the state level. The State Parliament could not pass the necessary laws needed for the normal functioning of state. Therefore, during several meetings of the Peace Implementation Council, the role of High Representative of the international community was strengthened and now he could impose any decision necessary for the functioning of the country and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina if both the Federal and the country Parliament could not pass it. Some of his decisions were rather controversial and it caused a lot of frustration among domestic politicians in Bosnia, who now perceived him as a gubernator of the international community and Bosnia as its colony.

VII. CONCLUSION

The problem of poor Bosniac (Muslim)-Croat relations has remained almost unchanged since the initiation of the Washington Agreement in February of 1994. Apparently, both sides did not change their political position as far as the administrative organization of Bosnia-Herzegovina was concerned. They entered the war with different political goals and a different picture of Bosnia which they fought for.

The Bosnian Croats, afraid of assimilation, prefer decentralization and, if possible, organization of districts on ethnic principles, which they think could assure their survival. They could control the basic institutions in these districts such as the schools or the police force.

The Bosniacs are pushing for greater unification at all levels (Federation and country) and they are even challenging the provisions of the Dayton Agreement that would prevent that. The Bosniac leadership still remembers a unitary Bosnia from Tito's time, and the key position that the Muslim nation held then. It will take one whole generation of young Bosniacs to grow up in a divided Bosnia to get used to the new position of their people. They have to get used to a new situation in which the rules of behavior made in Sarajevo will not be automatically applied to every corner of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Croats, who do not have exclusive control over their parts of Bosnia, consider the decentralization to be the key issue of Bosniac-Croat relations in the future.

This issue existed before the war, but it was not stressed because of a much more serious threat from the Serbian side. The international community (the European Community) opened the issue of administrative-territorial organization of Bosnia-Herzegovina trying to appease the Serbs, but it only intensified the rift between the Croats and the Muslims. Later, every subsequent plan reflected the indulgence of the international community toward the Serbs, convincing the Croats and the Muslims that aggression was not to be punished and its was worthwhile.

The situation became extremely chaotic with the half-hearted American involvement in the Yugoslav crisis. Occasionally the same messages were received by all sides in the Yugoslav crisis from both the European Union and the United States, but mostly the messages were completely different. Such chaotic diplomacy prolonged the war and affected Muslim-Croat relations in the worst possible way. A large portion of the responsibility for the Muslim-Croat war lays with the international community and its inconsistent policy.[91]

The introduction of the Containment Policy was one of the lowest points of international diplomacy during the Yugoslav crisis. It showed that the policy of the international community toward the Yugoslav crisis was only a set of half-hearted, inconsistent decisions.

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[91] Figure 7 is a graphic presentation of the wavering policy of the International Community.

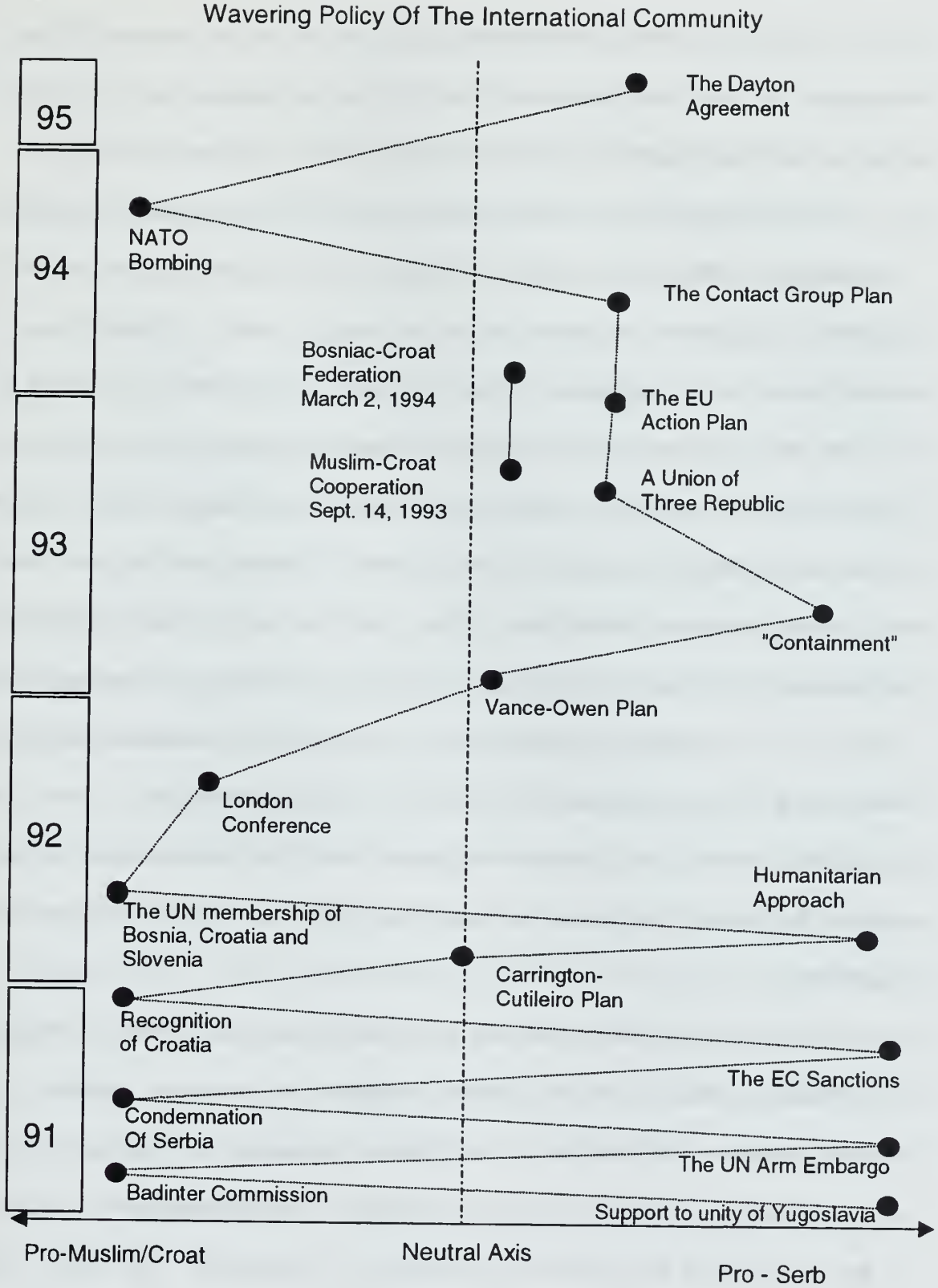
Wavering Policy Of The International Community
95
94
93
92
91
The Dayton Agreement
NATO Bombing
The Contact Group Plan
Bosniac-Croat Federation March 2, 1994
The EU Action Plan
Muslim-Croat Cooperation Sept. 14, 1993
A Union of Three Republic
"Containment"
Vance-Owen Plan
London Conference
Humanitarian Approach
The UN membership of Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia
Carrington-Cutileiro Plan
Recognition of Croatia
The EC Sanctions
Condemnation Of Serbia
The UN Arm Embargo
Badinter Commission
Support to unity of Yugoslavia
Pro-Muslim/Croat
Neutral Axis
Pro - Serb

Figure 7

Containment could have made sense if it were followed up by the lifting of the arms embargo on all sides of the conflict. In that case, all sides could find internal military and political equilibrium in Bosnia and within the whole region.

Muslims and Croats cannot be blamed for taking so much time to renew their alliance. When their conflict escalated, the international community led a dual-track negotiation that should have resolved the conflict. On the one side, the EC and the United Nations were negotiating a comprehensive solution by backing the partition, while the United States was trying, half-heartedly, to resolve the Muslim-Croat Federation issue, which was in effect in total opposition to the European partition policy (a Union of three Republics, the European Union Action Plan, and the Contact Group Plan). Such a dual approach affected the behavior of the Muslims and Croats. As long as the United States kept a low profile in all European attempts to resolve the crisis, the Muslims and the Croats were more inclined to accept the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina. After the United States took a more determined course, both sides changed their policy to that of the United States and accepted the creation of a joint Bosniac-Croat Federation.

The whole negotiation process, led under the auspices of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, revealed the weakness of diplomacy without muscle. Without the United States embarking on their policy, the Europeans did not have the necessary (credible) force to push the sides involved in the conflict over the threshold of reaching any agreement. The sides in the

conflict realized that they could play games with second-rate (European) powers without any consequences. Someone always managed to avoid an agreement for their own reasons. The Europeans lacked the force that would make implementation of any peace plan possible. This automatically meant that every plan they approved had a zero credibility rating in the eyes of the warring sides.

Although, it was much easier to negotiate after the Washington Agreement, the situation was still not ripe enough for a comprehensive settlement. This conflict lacked the strategic importance that would make the Clinton administration engage fully in resolving it. The situation changed when the conflict threatened the United States' relations with NATO allies. It also changed when pressure from both public and political opponents grew to the point when it might affect the results of the next election. That final push shifted the United States into full engagement in the Bosnian conflict.

The way in which the European Union managed the Yugoslav crisis proved to be a total disaster in the implementation of its Common Foreign and Security Policy. It became obvious that Europe was still too divided to lead a common policy. Their decision-making process was a continuous "pulling and pushing" which swayed their policy from one extreme to another. This alienated the parties in the conflict and Europe, as a mediator, lost its credibility. Did Europe and the other parties involved in the conflict learn anything from this crisis? Only time will tell.

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